

Title: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America
Annual Report to the General Board meeting April 12, 2008

Origin: Filed by Danny L. Stewart, Ph.D., Regional Minister and President

General Information:

Regional Staff: (Listing by name, with gender, whether ethnic minority)
Martha Baurichter, Administrative Assistant, (F, Anglo)
Dorothy Hudson, Part-Time Administrative Assistant, (F, Anglo)
Rebecca Bias, Financial Administrator (F, Anglo)
Madeline Harraway, Contract staff, Communications (F, African Am)
Conni Ess, Contract Staff, Women's Coordinator (F, Anglo)
David Machon, Contract Staff, CRY Coordinator (M, Anglo)
Faye Vaughan, Contract staff, Convocation Coordinator (F, African Am)
Kris Tenney-Brittian, North East Area Minister (F, Anglo)
Bill and Donna Rose-Heim, North West Area Ministers (M & F, Anglo)
Mike Weinman, Ozarks Lakes Area Minister, (M, Anglo)
Penny Ross-Corona, South East Gateway Area Minister (F, Anglo)

Number of Congregations: 277

Total Members: 55,823

States included in Region: Missouri (except Kansas City) and counties in Illinois surrounding St. Louis

Mission and Nurture:

The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) describes the nature, purpose and function of regions in paragraphs 19, 20, 23, 24 and 25. These paragraphs name mission, nurture and oneness as the three primary functions to realize the purpose of regions. At the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church of Mid-America held in St. Charles, MO, October 11, 2006, we affirmed these three elements in the formal adoption of a revised statement of our Vision/Mission/Identity. That three sentence statement is the guiding document for our work. That statement is:

In all its expressions, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America is one body within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and one body within the universal church of Jesus Christ.

Mutually we exist to connect, nurture, challenge, affirm and serve those seeking to:

Live into the Great Confession (Grow in Christ): Matt. 16:13-19; Eph 4: 13-16

Live up to the Great/New Commandments: Matt. 22:35-40; John 13:34-35

Live out the Great Commission: (Matt. 28:18-20)

In doing so, we demonstrate deep Christian spirituality, true community and a passion for justice.

The Mid-America Region accomplishes its mission through a Regional Missional Center and four Area Mission Centers. The Regional Mission Center is located in Jefferson City, in Central Missouri. From this center, coordination of Region wide functions occurs. Area Mission Centers are located in the North East at Columbia; in the North West at Cameron; in Ozarks Lakes at Springfield; and in South East Gateway at St. Louis. Functions of mission, nurture and wholeness are focused through these five mission centers.

From the Regional Mission Center mission, nurture and oneness are focused through ministries organized as Commissions, Constituencies and Partners. Each ministry brings together congregations and individuals with calling and passion for specific ministry tasks. These organizations work in close concert with Area

Mission Centers to accomplish the wide variety of mission and nurture ministries that together reach toward our mutual purpose.

The Commission on Ministry provides guidance, nurture, oversight and accountability for clergy in the region. Ordination and ministerial standing is overseen by the Commission on the Ministry. Licensing on behalf of the region is recommended by Area Committees on the Ministry.

The Commission on Mission and Unity provides oversight and involvement in mission beyond regional boundaries, the mission of pro-reconciliation and anti-racism throughout the region, movements of ecumenicity and cooperation in social and economic ministries.

The Commission on Leader Development focuses on the calling and nurture of individuals for roles in the church such as Youth development, teacher development, Elder and Deacon development.

The Commission on Vital Church oversees ministries of New Church development and transformation.

The Rickman Commission oversees the ministries of the Rickman Conference Center located in Jefferson City on the 200 acre campus of the Regional Mission Center. This facility provides space for retreats, camps, conferences and educational events.

Constituencies for Women, Men, Youth and Clergy oversee ministries directly related to their constituents and focus attention on mission, nurture and oneness.

Partnerships with other denominations and organizations provide a multiplication of mission activity and witness. Partnerships include MO IMPACT (a social action agency), Missouri Christian Leadership Forum, Woodhaven Ministries, other former NBA facilities, College of Regional Ministers, Heartland Regional Cluster, and educational ministries. Among the educational ministries are Missouri School of Religion (which is located in the Regional Mission Center), four Disciples-related institutions of higher education in the Region—Columbia College, Culver-Stockton, Drury, and William Woods College—and seminaries through Phillips Theological Seminary and the Friends of Eden Seminary.

The Regional Mission Center provides the infrastructure, technology and oversight for ministries of search and call and congregational help and support. Areas utilize these resources to provide closer-by ministries and to coordinate services with and through congregations in smaller geographic arenas.

Areas are critical to the accomplishment of our purpose, function and wholeness as a regional ministry. These structures formed from District ministries that began on the frontier as soon as the second church in the region was founded! The nine original districts consolidated to four continuing areas today. Since their founding, districts/areas have been ministries from the grass roots upward, with congregations providing funding to call and support a District/Area Minister. Additionally, congregations support Disciples Mission Fund and special day offerings and this has been the case since before United Promotion and Basic Mission Finance.

Highlights or Challenges of Ministry in the Region since the last report

This has been an especially productive year in Mid-America. *The Regional Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Team* sponsored a Regional Training event last April. Thirty-two participants enthusiastically embraced the vent. From that event two new PR/AR teams have been formed and are carrying the effort forward. These two new teams are in the North East Area and in the South East Gateway Area. Another event is in the planning stage for the coming year.

Transformation ministries have been expanding. Under the sponsorship of the Vital Church Commission, twenty-six participants attended the Transformation summit in Arlington, Texas in January, 2006. From that event Area teams for transformation have evolved in each Area. Initial efforts have included two clusters of congregations engaged in the Columbia Partnership series with George Bullard in the South East Gateway Area; a cluster of congregations in the Ozark Lakes Area working with the same group; more than

twenty committed congregations partnering in transformation in the North West Area as the Area engages in the Missional Church initiative and has Richard Hamm as a coach for the Area; a new coaching model for transformation in the North East Area under the leadership of new Area Minister Kris Tinney-Brittian; initial gatherings of a cluster of congregations in the South East Gateway Area with the New Beginnings initiative with Church Extension. The North West Area has committed to host the transforming church event for the Heartland regions in early 2009.

New Church efforts are springing to life in the region. Two new church starts have been funded. The Liberation Church in the University City area of St. Louis is enjoying a strong beginning. The Wentzville project did not succeed. Other new church starts are on the drawing boards. The Ozark Lakes Area is committed to a new church in a rapidly growing part of Springfield.

At the October 11, 2007 Regional Assembly, the region formally committed to becoming a *Global Mission Region*. Jeff and Susan Moore, returning Global Mission ministers in Lesotho, completed a deputation in the Region in December. The Regional Minister will be part of the Mission education trip to China in March. The region now has six Mission and Ministry Interpreters and is looking to double that number this year.

The Region has called Ed Varnum to a one-year contract to develop a *Stewardship Constituency* in the region. Stewardship education, awareness and calling events will be conducted in all four areas with the intention of having a constituency of stewards called together to continue the movement for the discipline and practice of Christian stewardship.

The Commission on the Ministry continues to receive new applicants for ordained ministry. Although there is still a great need for new clergy, the commission celebrates that there is a continued influx of new candidates. Many of these candidates are younger than in previous years. Several inquiries into partner standing and into recognition of standing have been received. The Commission is also implementing requirements for continuing education and boundary training for annual certification of standing.

The Region celebrates the arrival of Jay Stevenson as a volunteer who is focusing on re-igniting *Men's Ministries* in the region.

The Region has implemented a plan to fund a sabbatical for the regional minister. Plans for the sabbatical are in process.

The Region is anticipating the completion of construction on the new *Disciples Regional Mission Center* in Jefferson City. After nearly five years in temporary facilities, the new Mission Center is nearing completion. Move in dates are expected in mid-May with a consecration event likely to be held in September.

Challenges

There are the constant challenges to find the financial resources to continue the ministries with which we are familiar and to enable the ministries that are new. There is a special challenge in discovering the resources to meet the needs of an aging camp and conference center that will require major upgrading in the not too distant future. There is the challenge of readiness for and resistance to the new ministries God is calling us to perform. The region continues efforts to follow up with the Heart Beats of Faith capital campaign on behalf of the Church Wide Health Plan. This effort has been difficult, with congregations slow to make decisions about participation.

Barriers we experience and/or matters of record:

Mid-America contracts for an annual audit. The audit report for the 2006 year of operations was submitted to CFC last June. The audit visit for the 2007 year of operations has been conducted and will be forwarded to the OGMP when it is completed by the auditors.

Goals related to the General Church mission and vision:

Becoming a Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Church: to continue the development of the two new teams already founded; sponsor another training event; attempt to establish new teams in the remaining two areas; continue to resource congregations and teams in their efforts.

Establish new churches: to continue the effort to found new churches; convert property held for years into capital that provides growth for financial support for new churches; support new church movements in areas; open the doors to possible affiliations by congregations seeking a denominational home.

Transforming congregations: to continue the development of transformation movements in all four areas.

Leader Development: to continue the effort to identify, call, nurture and train new leaders for the mission of the church.