

Title: Report of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska

Origin: Kenneth W. Moore, 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)

- Regional Minister: Kenneth W. Moore, male
- Regional Minister for Leader Development, and Program Administrator for Cotner College Educational Ministries: Sharon Shields, female, three-quarter time
- Outdoor Ministries and Youth Director (with UCC): Lesa Gengenbach, female, part-time
- Kamp Kaleo Administrator (with UCC): Gaylene O'Brien, female, part-time
- Disciples Women's Ministries: Lois LaFon, female, part-time
- Disciples Men Coordinator and Business Manager: Paul Few, male, volunteer
- Bookkeeper: Genevieve Randall, female, part time
- Administrative Assistant for CCN and Cotner College Educational Ministries: Janeen Bruner, female
- Communications Coordinator: Donna Lutes, female, part-time
- Project Director of Transforming Covenants (with UCC): Peter Frazier-Koontz, male, half-time
- Covenantal Group Coordinator (with UCC): Russell Seger, male, part-time

Number of Congregations: 52

Total Members: 8761

States included in Region: Nebraska

1. *(par. 54.b.) What are your long range planning goals and how are they integrated into the mission and vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?*

GOALS FOR THE NEBRASKA REGION FOR 2007-2010

Goal #1: Deepen the connection and commitment of local congregations to the ministries supported by the Nebraska Region and the Disciples' Mission Fund.

Goal #2: Establish two new congregations in Omaha by 2010, and 20 new congregations in the Nebraska Region by 2020.

Goal #3: Secure a more accessible Regional Office for the Nebraska Region.

Goal #4: Create an emphasis on Anti-racism among our congregations in the Nebraska Region.

Our Regional Board adopted these four goals in 2006 and they were presented at the Regional Assembly October 2006. We believe, as do other Disciples, that God is calling us to be a "faithful, growing church, that demonstrates true community, deep spirituality and a passion for Justice (Micah 6:8)." We believe that these goals will cause us to strive for the highest and best that we can be as we boldly follow Jesus into the mission field just beyond our doorsteps and to the ends of the earth.

2. *(par 54.d.) 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?*

Because of the growing restrictions on immigration since 2001, Miguel Talero, the founding pastor of our Hispanic ministry in Omaha, was not able to renew his religious worker's visa and returned to Colombia. Obed Garza, who

directed the music ministry of the new congregation, accepted a call to serve as the congregation's pastor. Nearly all of the persons who came into the congregation during Pastor Talero's ministry left the church when the Taleros returned to Colombia. The Region and New Church ministries have worked closely with Pastor Garza to help him develop the skills he needs as a new church pastor. Currently there are three families active at Aliente del Cielo (Breath of God). The Church of the Open Door, under the leadership of Dana Bainbridge, has acquired a meeting place and continues to attract additional persons into its servant ministry.

The two new congregations in Lincoln are both thriving. When the contractor of the SouthPointe Christian Church building failed to meet his obligations to the companies and individuals who did most of the work on the building, the Region, Church Extension and the Congregation put together a team of persons who reached settlements with each of the creditors. This partnership between the three manifestations of the church worked well in a successful conclusion to this painful experience. SouthPointe was officially chartered as a Disciples of Christ congregation on November 18, 2007. CrossBridge Christian Church has had an average attendance of 245 so far this year. The combined attendance of these two new congregations exceeds the combined attendance of our other six Lincoln Disciple churches.

The Region's New Congregation Establishment Commission is planning on offering a New Church Summit in the near future. They will be targeting this event particularly to the graduates and current students in Education for Lay Ministry.

Doug Pfeiffer is leading the Region's Congregational Transformation Team. The team has entered into an agreement with the Columbia Partnership to train Congregational Transformation Coaches in Nebraska.

Martha Herrin, one of the four National Anti-racism Trainers, presented an anti-racism seminar for the members of the Regional Board at its February 16, 2008 meeting.

3. *(par.25) In what ways are you partnering with the other expressions of the Church and with other general ministries?*

We are working with Church World Service in a project to raise "Water for Sudan". We are challenging our congregations to raise \$8,000 by the October 2008 Regional assembly to dig a bore well in Sudan, Africa.

The Christian Church in Nebraska continues to work very closely with the Child Saving Institute. CSI serves over 3,000 children and their families each year. It has an annual budget of over \$8 million, a staff of 225 and over 300 volunteers involved in 18 different programs. Volunteers from congregations in the Region assisted with CSI's move to their new building in central Omaha.

The Regional Minister, the Past Moderator of the Region, and the Business Manager serve on the Board of Trustees at Phillips Theological Seminary. We have had little response in our efforts to maintain a relationship with Culver-Stockton College.

The Region has a close partnership with the Division of Overseas Ministry. We are working with Jane Sullivan-Davis to find ways that we can cooperate more fully with Global Ministries in our partnership with the E.P. Church, Ghana, West Africa. One of our pastors will serve as the director of a Study Trip to Ghana in January 2009. The Region hosts missionary visits each year. My wife and I plan to visit our Nebraska missionary partners, Michael and Doreen McFarlan, at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in March 2008. New church pastor, James Gordon, visited China in 2006.

We have continued our 40-year close partnership with the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ. Kamp Kaleo is now owned jointly by a board made up with an equal number of representatives of the UCC and the Disciples of Christ. A minister of the United Church of Christ serves on the staff of Cotner College Educational Ministries and the UCC has representatives on the Cotner Commission and our Regional Board. Disciples continue to be well represented in the leadership of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

The Regional Church partners with the United Methodists, UCC, and Presbyterians in United Ministries in Higher Education. We support campus ministries at six Nebraska colleges. This spring an excellent video was prepared in which students told how their lives are being impacted by each of these ministries.

4. (par.20) *How have you been involved in congregations to fulfill their mission and ministry?*

Each year the Christian Church in Nebraska provides an Elders' Retreat for congregational leaders. Elaine Forrest, Clinical Pastoral Education Director for the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, led this year's retreat. This retreat provided an opportunity for Elders to learn hands-on skills to make them more effective in visiting those in the hospital, the homebound and in hospice care.

Following a tragic shooting at a mall in Omaha we offered a workshop "How Churches Can Help: The Faith Community Responds to Young Adults Living with Mental Illness."

The Regional Church partnered with eight Lincoln congregations in the relocation of thirty refugees, providing logistical assistance for the collection of household and personal items for these families. The 2008 Kamp Kaleo mission project will provide an opportunity for campers to learn about these Ukraine families and the challenges they face making a new home in America. The Region is also working with the Lincoln congregations in sponsoring a family from Iraq.

Disciples Women director, Lois LaFon, conducted Spring Previews in five sites attended by over 100 women. The Christian Women's Fellowship groups raised funds "Bears and Books for Botswana." The Regional Cabinet also worked with local groups to assist them in raising funds to combat hunger.

Disciples Men and Disciples Women offered a variety of retreats offering training and inspiration for congregational leaders. Each of these ministries offers a major weekend event. For the past few years both groups have offered an annual one-day spiritual retreat. The Disciples Men's groups across the state participate in the International Day of Pancakes. The 49th Annual Mid-Winter Rally and Buffalo Feed held last February in Grand Island featured a program on New Church Ministry presented by James Gordon, pastor of CrossBridge Christian Church. The men's rally in southeast Nebraska provided an opportunity for participants to learn about ways that Christians are ministering to people on the margins of society.

Cotner College Educational Ministries has been offering since 1998 a three year course in laity education called Education for Lay Ministry in partnership with the Nebraska Conference of the UCC and two Nebraska Presbyteries. There were twenty graduates in 2007 and another seventeen will graduate next year. Eighty-one students have completed or are completing their ELM studies. Of the graduates, 53 of them have served or are serving our Nebraska congregations as licensed pastors, associate or assistant pastors, children and youth ministers, supply preachers, chaplains, and Christian Education and/or Spiritual Formation ministers. Starting fall of 2008 the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska will begin sending students to Education for Lay Ministry.

The Regional Church offers a Winter Convocation event each January. Todd Adams, Associate General Minister and Vice President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) spoke at the January 21-23, 2008 event on ways that pastors can be more effective as stewardship leaders. In February, Kenneth Purscell led the Panhandle Ministers' Retreat. The theme of this event: "Hermeneutics on the Fly: Yes, You CAN Study the Scripture Deeply and Still Have Time to Preach Well."

We continue to receive a good response to our minister's events by videoconferencing. Thanks to support from the Lilly Endowment, we have been able to bring noted scholars and visionaries to Nebraska from virtually any place in the world to be in dialog with pastors in locations across the state. Wayne C. Barrett presented an Income Tax Seminar in March 2008 for pastors, treasurers, and church officers.

Whenever members of our staff go to meetings with ministers and congregations, we take along "Books in a Box". Many of these books are new or recent publications from the Alban Institute and Chalice Press. These books can be borrowed or bought. Since Cotner College has the status of a bookstore we are able to purchase books at a 20-40% discount, which is passed on to the buyer.

Cotner College received a grant to provide workshops for Disciple, UCC, and Presbyterian pastors about each congregation's responsibilities to both victims and perpetrators in the case of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Workshops have been held at various locations across the state.

Lon Oliver led three "Evangelism Road Trip" seminars on vital ministry in small congregations in September 2007. R. Wayne Calhoun, Sr. will be the featured speaker for the September 2008 evangelism seminars on the theme "Wake Up to a New Day in the Church".

We have 115 Nebraska pastors as participants in Covenant Learning Groups as part of the Nebraska Pastoral Excellence Project. Our pastors report that these facilitated regular meetings with their peers spur creativity, excitement and a renewed passion for ministry. Evaluation data show that the Pastoral Excellence Project in Nebraska has helped our clergy feel more spiritually alive and renewed in their sense of call. Over one-quarter of our participants have indicated that the Project has increased their desire to remain in ministry in Nebraska.

The Region provides regular training opportunities for Interim Ministers.

5. The Administrative Committee/General Board 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.

In recent years our camping program has ended each year with a deficit. This has been a major challenge since we lack funds in the Region and Conference to cover this additional expense. We formed a Kaleo Futuring Task Group to raise "bridge" funds in support of this ministry while we organized a new 501(c)(3) corporation called "Kaleo on the River" to take "ownership" of the camp. We received \$28,000 from a special appeal sent to individuals. Last year we raised \$12,000 through our 4th Annual Junk Jaunt fundraiser. We are encouraging churches to have Spaghetti Dinners this spring to raise additional funds for this ministry. Thanks to these activities and a generous gift from an individual donor we ended 2007 with a significant surplus.

6. Other items of interest

CrossBridge Christian Church has offered the Region land appraised at \$960,000 for a new Regional Church office building. The excellent location for the proposed office would provide easy freeway access to the office for the Region's congregations. Located next door to this growing congregation, the office could be utilized for Bible Study groups and church school classes on evenings and weekends. The Regional Board has just one more year to raise the funds for a new Regional Church office before the offer is withdrawn. There has not been support in the Region for a Capital Campaign, so we are testing the waters to see if individuals and congregations would support a building for Cotner College Educational Ministries on this site that could also be used by the Regional Church.

7. 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:

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>
Total Income	\$240,003	\$231,013	\$226,670
Total Expenses	<u>\$228,597</u>	<u>\$226,732</u>	<u>\$238,301</u>
Surplus (Deficit) *	\$ 11,406	\$ 4,281	(\$11,631)

*Unaudited

- 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?***

The Permanent Funds are held by the Nebraska Christian Church and Cotner College Foundation, Inc. a separate legal entity that grants about a 5% allocation to the Regional Church each year. In 2007 it made a \$16,000 distribution. This was an increase from \$15,000 in 2006 and 2005. The Foundation held regional assets at the end of 2007 of \$302,568.36.

- E. If your Region has had insufficient income or deficits in Part 7 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.)?***

We have not had a deficit in the last two years.

- F. What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region’s life and vitality?***

In 2009, the Region will no longer be receiving income from the Nebraska Pastoral Excellence Project. We plan to apply for a renewal grant to continue to provide resources for our pastors, but there will no longer be income to the Region in support of these activities.