

GENERAL BOARD

2008

Title: Report of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma

Origin: Rev. Thomas R. Jewell, Regional Pastor

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

Oklahoma Regional Church Staff



Rev. Thomas R. Jewell
Regional Pastor
(M/W)



Rev. Gary Mitchell
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(M/W)



Rev. Charles Hattendorf
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(M/W)



Rev. Loma Sullivan
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(F/W)



Ms. Jean Scott
Gaudin
Pastoral Asst/Office
Mngr
(F/W)



Mr. Richard Keith
Financial Admin/Building
Mngr
(M/W)



Ms. Laura Townsley
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Ms. Joyce McLendon
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Rev. Dorothy Coy Light
Communications
Director
(F/W)

Regional Campsite Administrators:



Mr. Spencer Bowen
Central Christian
Camp
(M/W)



Mr. Harold Wegner
Texoma Christian
Camp
(M/W)



Mr. Jim Hawley
Camp Christian
(M/W)

Number of Congregations: 175
Congregations in Formation: 2

Total Members: 39,247
Participating: 26,530
Worship Attendance: 14,858

States included in the Region: Oklahoma
Website: www.okdisciples.org

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 long range planning goals of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma continue to center around our Mission Statement:

“We, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma, accept our mission to be the Church. By the grace of God, our ministry grows from our values. We

- Serve that people will know God through Jesus Christ,
- Work together through covenantal relationships,
- Cherish the health and welfare of local congregations,
- Honor and accept congregational and individual diversity,
- Strive for effective ministry, witness and mission,
- Long for God’s justice.

Our vision, as a region, is to be a church that makes a difference in the lives of people through effective ministry, witness, and mission.”

Serve that people will know God through Jesus Christ:



In conjunction with our state’s centennial celebration, Oklahoma Disciples celebrated six congregations’ centennial year this past September with an old-fashioned ice cream social sponsored by the Annual Fund Task Force at Oklahoma Disciples Center in Oklahoma Center. Held in the Dorothy Cassel Barnes Memorial Garden, the event featured Lt. Governor Jari Askins, member of First Christian Church, Duncan, who presented each congregation with a special centennial plaque. Nearly 400 Disciples from across the Regional Church gathered to honor First Christian Church,

Altus; Avard Christian Church, Alva; First Christian Church, Anadarko; First Christian Church, Pawhuska; Pine Street Christian Church, Tulsa; and First Christian Church, Skiatook. Regional Pastor, Rev. Thomas R. Jewell, honored the ministry of all 100+ year-old congregations with a recitation of those 80 congregations still strong and actively serving and worshipping in this 21st century.

One of the hallmarks of Regional Church ministry is the summer camp and conference program offered each year. There is perhaps no other place in ministry where service and the knowledge of Jesus Christ are more keenly felt than when at camp. In 2007 more than 678 youth were involved in summer camp and conference ministry. Under the leadership of the Rev. Gary Mitchell, Associate Regional Pastor for Children, Youth, and Young Adults and some 165 adults, both lay and clergy, countless hours and several days were provided so that a wonderful Disciples educational and recreational opportunity could be experienced by Oklahoma youth.



Young adult ministry continues to expand through annual Regional Church ministries retreat, water weekend, mission events, and a winter ski trip. Specific ministries are being created that encourage both congregational and Regional Church participation by those aged 19 through 25.

Work together through covenantal relationships:



Oklahoma Disciple Men are now in the final stages of preparation for hosting Sessions 2008. Meeting with the general church planning team, Oklahoma men have brought to the table their unique perspectives and challenges that will prompt Sessions 2008, July 17-20, to be an outstanding men's event. An outstanding array of speakers has been secured with the Rev. Mark Briley preaching on opening night along with *Acappella* – the fabulous men's group that sang at last year's Ft. Worth General Assembly. The next evening, Rev. Bill Lee, former Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, will be the guest preacher. On Sunday, General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, will preach the Sessions 2008 closing worship. Men can register on line at www.Sessions2008.org; before May 1, a \$70 discount will be given.

Oklahoma Disciple Women hosted a fall meeting of the ROSES Disciple Women Leadership Team. With 39 leaders from across the three regions that comprise ROSES – Great River, Oklahoma, and the Southwest – the women spent three days with Adonna Bowman and Lonnie Graves of the Office of Disciples Women, Disciples Home Missions, Indianapolis, as the keynote speakers.

More than 180 women attended spring previews of fall study materials and the three women's retreats held each fall are continuing opportunities for Oklahoma women to share their faith and grow in Christian stewardship.

Encounter – Oklahoma's annual Regional Church-wide women's event – was held in June at First Christian Church, Norman, with 179 women attending. The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, gave keynote lectures on the theme – *Women of the Chalice: Wise, Strong, Compassionate*. Rev. Loma Sullivan is now in her second year as a full-time Associate Regional Pastor with primary responsibilities for women's ministries.

In response to the continuing need for Gulf Coast recovery efforts, the Oklahoma Regional Church, through its 175 congregations, has sent scores of volunteers and financial assistance directly to those in need. In February '08, the Central Area organized a work trip during Week of Compassion that involved 45 persons from 16 congregations in a week-long effort at First Christian Church, Port Arthur, Texas. Three houses benefited from this concerted effort. An additional mission trip, sponsored by the Faith in Action Commission, was made to Greensburg, Kansas, in October '07 with 13 persons representing 5 congregations giving a week of construction ministry to our sisters and brothers in Kansas.

Disciples Overseas Ministry partner, the Rev. Jorge Luis Bardeguez, spent 6 weeks in late summer sharing news of his 14 year ministry in Nicaragua. Rev. Bardeguez visited and presented programs at 28 different sites around the Regional Church.



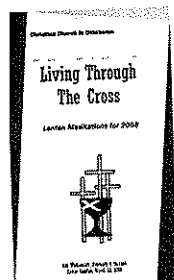
In September, the Oklahoma Regional Board voted unanimously to receive Mr. Alex Morse as our Global Ministry Missionary Partner. Mr. Morse works with the organization, *Caminante*, in the Dominican Republic which provides education and life skills to children vulnerable to becoming involved in a growing child exploitation industry in that area. The Regional Church is having their first mission pilgrimage to the Dominican Republic during the week of this General Board meeting.

Cherish the health and welfare of local congregations:

After nearly two years of preparation and planning, the Regional Church Elders program began in Spring 2007 with the installation of 15 Regional Elders serving clusters of 12 congregations. The Elders will: Be a communication link with the congregations to enhance connections with the whole church, establish and maintain a good relationship with each of the ministers, communicate the needs of the ministers and congregations to the Regional Church pastoral staff, represent the Regional Church at liturgical and ceremonial events in the life of the congregations and ministers (i.e. anniversaries and dedications), be responsive to illness and hospitalization, read church newsletters for significant information about the congregation and be alert to the special needs of ministers and congregations during times of transition. This new ministry was made possible because of increased giving to the Regional Church and the dedicated efforts of Regional Church staff and volunteers.

Building on the Transformation Summit held in April 2007, the Regional Church has provided active support to the congregational transformation initiative. The 2008 Regional Assembly, April 24-26, 2008, will carry a transformation theme, "A New Thing Springs Forth" with keynote speakers and workshops all providing focus to this theme. In addition, 18 Oklahoma pastors and lay leaders are being trained as "transformation coaches," capable of working with Oklahoma congregations as they embark on their own transformation journeys. Finally, the region's Transformation Team is publishing and distributing a bi-monthly newsletter, "Transformation Topics."

The Oklahoma Regional Church staff begins each Wednesday morning throughout the year with a half-hour of devotion which includes praying for a specific, different Oklahoma congregation and its staff each week throughout the year. Led by pastoral and office staff, the joys and concerns of other Regional Churches, their staffs, as well as the general church staff are always included in this weekly devotional time.



This past year the Commission on Worship and Spiritual Growth continued, and probably now has established, the tradition of the publishing Advent and Lenten devotional booklets featuring clergy and lay persons from throughout the Regional Church. A different devotion was featured each day on the region's website www.okdisciples.org. The devotional booklets continue to be

enthusiastically received by congregations, several of which downloaded and printed copies for their members to use for their personal devotions during these special seasons in the church year.

A well-established tradition continued to flourish this past year as ordained and licensed ministers were, once again, invited to Advent and Lenten worships celebrated by the regional pastoral staff. Hosting this past year occasions for Advent: Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, and First Christian Church, Moore, and for Lent: Yale Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, and Hillcrest Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

Honor and accept congregational and individual diversity:

The Oklahoma Reconciliation Council last year expanded its grant application guidelines to be inclusive of local congregations seeking funding to find ways to be more inclusive in their mission and ministries. As a result, some \$16,000 was awarded to eight ministries in 2007.

Strive for effective ministry, witness and mission:

This year Leadership Training School featured the Rev. Fred Harris, Senior Pastor of First Christian Church, Hagerstown, Maryland, as the keynote preacher. Fred challenged more than 400 Disciples to “share the feast,” giving to God in generous response to all that God has done for us. Held at First Christian Church, Oklahoma City, some 67 congregations sent leaders to this annual January event. Thirty workshops were offered on topics ranging from basic training in eldership and spiritual formation to effective stewardship practices and mission trips. There was even a Bible class for the children to attend.

Long for God’s justice:

Disciples Retirement Community of Oklahoma, Inc., established in May, 2005, in direct response to the sale of the Oklahoma Christian Retirement Community (OCRC) by the National Benevolent Association, has been a shining example of our Regional Church “longing for God’s justice.” During its third year, DRCO has received gifts totaling over \$56,142 in 2007 that were used to provide benevolent care for two Disciple residents of the former OCRC that are in need. While there is no way to predict the number of residents or the dollars needed for the future, DRCO is committed to finding ways to provide for those who entered OCRC believing that the “church would take care of them if they should ever run out of funds.”

The following paragraph is a direct quote from last year’s report to the General Board because nothing has changed since last year: “The Oklahoma regional board continues to pursue with the National Benevolent Association the just and fair distribution of dollars given to OCRC for the express purpose of providing benevolent care for those in need. In recent months, NBA has indicated a willingness to distribute funds directly to Oklahoma so that benevolent care can be offered to those who were residents of OCRC at the time of the NBA bankruptcy in 2005. Hopefully, a resolution will be finalized before the April meeting of the General Board.”

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?

Last year, a Regional Church "Disaster Response Team" was organized to develop ways in which Oklahoma Disciples might respond to future emergencies and disasters in a more organized, effective and efficient manner. Emergency generators and chain saws have been purchased by the region through Week of Compassion gifts received regionally and generally. These were made available after several devastating ice storms in the northeast area of the Regional Church. Congregations have provided information which will lead to the development of a regional emergency response database. And, a Regional Church disaster response procedure is being developed.

Activity with in-formation congregations in the region has diminished during the year. Presently there is just one such start in progress. Efforts are being made to engage leadership in the Northeast area to provide direction in that area. The Oklahoma City Christian Church Commission changed its operating policies to allow for operational grants of up to \$50,000 per year to assist metropolitan Oklahoma City new church starts. Hopefully, this change will provide an impetus for several new church initiatives.

Oklahoma's contributions to the 2007 Pentecost Offering remained steady at \$37,489.

In what ways are you partnering with the other expressions of the church and with other general ministries?

"Share the Feast," the theme for last year's General Assembly, remained the theme for Oklahoma's Regional Church program promoting Disciples Mission Fund giving in 2007. Based on the scriptural witnesses of Matthew 6:19-21 and Psalm 8, the Regional Church is encouraging all 175 congregations to participate in looking at their past efforts of giving to missions beyond their doorsteps, to affirm at least a tithe of annual church income for DMF, and to work toward the Regional Church goal of a 15 percent increase over the previous year's contributions.

How have you been involved in congregations to fulfill their mission and ministry?



Stole Camp, a one-day session for students in practical parish ministries, was held this year at Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, in conjunction with Phillips Theological Seminary. This event invites first-year seminarians and participants in the licensed minister training program to be engaged with Regional Church pastoral staff and seminary faculty in particular parish skills crucial for those just beginning ministry in a congregational setting.

Our Regional Church licensed minister training program continues to grow under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Les Brown, Midwest City. 17 men and women are participating in the current

year's program. Brenda Pearl, Bartlesville; Janet Peery, Shawnee; Joel Blomgren, Edmond; Elaine Howsley, Purcell; and Marilyn Knott, Oklahoma City graduated from this two-and-one-half-year program this year – one of the largest graduating classes on record.

The Oklahoma Regional Church, in covenant with eight congregations, ordained eight persons into ministry since our last General Board meeting: Scott Taylor, Disciples Christian Church, Bartlesville; Janice Hill, South Grand Lake Christian Church, Langley; Pam McGrath, Southern Hills Christian Church, Edmond; Craig Rutherford, First Christian Church, Marietta; Rebecca Highfield, Southern Hills Christian Church, Tulsa; Devon McAnally, Central Christian Church, Enid; Gina Jackson, First Christian Church, Sand Springs; Kinsie Mahaffie, Crown Heights Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

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.

The 2007 campaign of the Annual Fund of the Christian Church in Oklahoma was an overwhelming success. The goal of \$150,000.00 was *oversubscribed* by \$660. – a total increase of 9 percent over 2006 campaign receipts. Special thanks to immediate past regional moderator Mrs. Clarice Morrison, Oklahoma City, for chairing the 2007 campaign. The Rev. Marsha Bishop, Palmer Lake, Colorado serves as Annual Fund consultant with the Rev. Charles Hattendorf, Oklahoma Associate Regional Pastor as the Annual Fund Director.



The Oklahoma Disciples Foundation was able to distribute from 67 named endowment funds \$274,831 in 2008 – an overall increase of 12.5 percent from the 2007 distributions. In the past year, three new endowments were established benefiting congregational ministries, as well as a new endowment for the Association of Disciples Musicians. This is the second year that the Foundation has been able significantly to increase distributions due to a new policy and sound financial investment. These funds not only support Regional Church ministries, but also the three Regional Church campsites, Phillips Theological Seminary, women's and men's ministries, scholarships, minority and small congregations' ministries. The Rev. Dr. Kyle Maxwell, Executive Director, Ms. Linda Hill, Development Specialist and Mrs. Vicki Rose, Director of Operations since May 2007, form the staff of the Foundation which is governed by an Oklahoma board of directors.

Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region:

- A. What type of accounting method do you use?*** Cash
- B. Is a professional audit done annually on your books?*** Yes
- C. For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, please provide the following information:***

	2007	2006	2005
Total Income	662,076	606,913	584,155
Total Expenses	628,871	601,289	639,980
Surplus (Deficit)	33,205	5,624	(55,825)

- 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?***

\$532,609 – Permanent Funds for operations support.

What is the percentage of draw and how is it calculated?

An annual dividend is declared by the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation board in January and the distribution is made in February. The dividend is based on a rolling quarter average of the performance of the pool. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma's distribution is based on units in the pooled fund, with a limit of the historic dollar value of gifts received for benefit of CCIO. This distribution is unrestricted to be used at the discretion of the Oklahoma Regional Board.

If your Region has had insufficient income or deficits, how has your Regional Board and Finance Committee been trying to balance your budgets?

We are continuing to repay a portion of our 2005 operating budget deficit by including it as a line item in our current operating budget.

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

Continuing our program emphasis - *Share the Feast*- which seeks to provide congregations with current, accurate giving records as well as developing stewardship motivation and information for congregations so that enthusiasm and commitment towards developing giving as a faith response to God is encouraged.