

Title: CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN OREGON GENERAL BOARD REPORT April 12-15, 2008

Origin:

A. HOW HAS THE OREGON REGION FULFILLED THE REGION'S PRIMARY PURPOSE AS STATED IN PARAGRAPH 20 OF *THE DESIGN*?

Many of the region's primary ministries are listed in response to question 3 below. In addition to those noted below, the Christian Church in Oregon has taken steps through Global Ministries to become a Global Mission Region.

- 1) Seven Oregon Disciples have received training as Global Mission Interpreters.
- 2) Their efforts will now center on educating congregations about the mission of Global Ministries and encouraging congregations to enlist as Global Mission Congregations.
- 3) The Regional Board has accepted a new goal of raising \$39,000 for the FEDICE (Ecumenical Federation for Integrated Training Development and Education) ministry in Ecuador. This "extra mile" fund goal will support women's economic development projects in two provinces and augment salary support for our global mission partner, FEDICE Executive Director Blanca Puma.
- 4) First Christian Church in Salem sponsored a mission and friendship tour to Cuatros Esquinas, Ecuador, with two regional staff participating. The group shared worship and fellowship with several congregations, including a Disciples of Christ community in Ibarra. They also visited several economic development projects funded in recent years by Oregon Disciples.

B. HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES OF MINISTRY IN THE OREGON REGION

HIGHLIGHTS

Partnerships between local, regional and general church ministries brought multiple blessings.

- 1) Women's ministries in Oregon have taken new shape in recent times. Six "Pray and Play" days for women of all ages took place around the region in the spring. These events used material from *New Day Magazine*, published by *Christian Board of Publication* and edited by our Regional Minister Cathy Myers Wirt. *Disciples World Web Page* highlighted this program in February 2008.
- 2) *Church Extension* President Jim Powell keynoted a leader training event in April, 2007 introducing the New Beginnings program. As a result, six congregations are in the midst of working with this program for transformational reshaping of congregational ministry.
- 3) *Christian Church Foundation* Vice President Don Sarton presented a workshop on financial controls for congregations at the same event.
- 4) *Lexington Theological Seminary* sponsored a two week study tour in Mexico led by Dr. Daisy Machado in June. The Regional Ministers and their sons went on this trip and became better acquainted with the ministries of Disciples churches in Mexico and *Global Ministries* staff Justino Perez and Zaida Rivera.
- 5) The Search and Call office of *Disciples Home Missions* continued to assist the region and congregation in calling pastoral leaders to new ministries, using a new web based system and background checking service. Two congregations ended up calling a daughter and a father to Oregon pulpits. First Christian in Springfield called Erin Curtis while Lynchwood Christian in Portland called her father, Michael Crouch. The father and daughter preached installation sermons for each other. A UCC and Disciples related congregation in Ione called Stacy Shelton as their new pastor, just a few weeks before she gave birth to her daughter.

- 6) *Week of Compassion* provided an emergency grant for local flood relief after severe storms devastated two Oregon communities. Oregon Disciples congregations responded with significant designated gifts to help in the communities of Vernonia and Tillamook.
- 7) *Northwest Christian College* once again hosted the Stone-Campbell symposium, bringing together people from Churches of Christ, Independent Christian Church and Disciples of Christ.
- 8) One major highlight for the region was that expenses came in below income for the first time in many years.

CHALLENGES: Two factors presented the greatest challenge in the past year. These represent intensified demands upon regional leadership.

- 1) The first category concerns pursuit of the stated priorities of the Disciples of Christ. The number of new and affiliating congregations plus the number of existing congregations involved in transformation meant that many congregations were involved in significant change in the past year. The Oregon region is in relationship with new, affiliating and emerging faith communities in ten different locations across the state. Six congregations are involved with the New Beginnings program for congregational transformation.
- 2) A second category of need concerns intervention in conflicted situations. This includes a) conflict within congregations and b) investigation of alleged ministerial misconduct.

Both of these two categories required more time and attention from regional staff in the past year at a time when staffing was temporarily reduced to help balance the budget. Addressing both kinds of intensified needs, while maintaining regular program functions, proved to be very challenging, especially with reduced staff.

C. GOALS OF THE REGION WITH REGARD TO THE PRIORITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST).

Anti-Racism: Work of the Oregon Region has centered upon Yakama Christian Mission, a unique ministry of Disciples located in the Yakama Nation in central Washington state. The Mission suddenly lost supporting funds from Disciples Home Missions at the end of 2006. Oregon Disciples and many others responded by sending work groups, individual and congregational contributions and in kind donations. Work groups coming to the Yakama Mission receive anti-racism training as part of the experience. Several Oregon congregations send groups each year. Regional Reconciliation funds support training experiences at Yakama Christian Mission. Hood River Valley Christian Church has given strong support by donating a van and allocating a portion of the congregation's recent bequest gifts to the mission. The Oregon Regional Women's Circle sponsored projects that provided a new stove, dishwasher, 10 new tables, bathroom fixtures, and an outside BBQ (in partnership with the No. CA region). They are currently half way towards a goal of \$2500 to sponsor a summer intern in the children's program for summer 2008. Yakama Staff members have been present at regional gatherings and four persons from our region serve on the Yakama Christian Mission board, including Regional Minister, Doug Wirt.

Leader Development: Our General Ministry partner Kaye Edwards of Disciples Home Missions has provided *Children's Worship and Wonder* training for many of our congregations. This emphasis has yielded positive results in many places, including last summer's Junior Camp.

A grant from the Oreon E. Scott Foundation has allowed us to take a new direction with emerging church leaders. Elaine Andres of First Christian Church in Eugene leads the Youth Ministry Spirituality Support Program. Ten youth ministry leaders come together 3-4 hours monthly for skills training, spiritual nurture and support. Alternate months are framed as prayer Sabbath events with the other months serving as times of skill based training. The program includes 12 individual sessions of spiritual direction for youth ministry leaders and cultivation of ties to wider Disciples ministries.

The grant also offers support for new church leaders who wish to attend Disciples related events in other parts of the country, such as the Black Ministers retreat and the New Church Planters mission trip to Honduras.

The past year has also shown an increase in persons considering a call to seminary studies. At least three 2008 college graduates, several persons in midlife and a number of youth in regional camps and retreats have expressed interest in preparing for full time ministry. A dozen candidates are presently in the under care process working toward ordination in the Oregon region.

Oregon Regional Women's Circle paid to send two young women on the Office of Disciples Women trip to Chicago in May 2008. This *Women's Action Web* assists women 18-30 years of age to learn about local missions and how to be leaders in missions. These two women were also nominated to serve for one year term on the Regional Women's Circle upon return so that what they have learned can be integrated into the women's ministries of the whole region. By adding several one year term positions to the women's circle, we are able to cultivate new leaders in a wide variety of constituencies.

The Oregon Women's Circle is also preparing to host an interregional gathering of seven regional women's cabinets/circles in May 2009 with the Office of Disciples Women.

New Church: Ten new, affiliating or emerging ministries are in conversation with Christian Church in Oregon. Those which have officially started the process include Peniel Ministries, Calvary Christian Church, Zion Ministries and Iglesia Hispana Discipulos de Cristo (all in Portland); Iglesia Cristiana Escudo y Fortaleza (Salem), and Ione Community Church (DOC/UCC in Ione). Conversations have also begun with emerging Hispanic ministries in Molalla and Grants Pass and with a Haitian ministry in Portland. First Christian Church in Forest Grove has offered a bi-lingual ministry for several years, with support from the regional church. New church leaders have attended numerous trainings conducted by the New Church Ministries office of Church Extension. Calvary Christian Church has partnered with the Red Cross to provide shelter for some of the homeless in Portland during the coldest winter nights. Peniel Ministries organized a community concert in July which drew hundreds of visitors. Iglesia Escudo y Fortaleza broadcasts worship services on local community access television. Iglesia Hispana Discipulos de Cristo began worship services in November, meeting at Parkrose United Church of Christ.

Transformation: Six congregations signed on for the New Beginnings program of Church Extension, starting in September 2007. These include First Christian Church in Dallas, FCC Medford, FCC North Bend, FCC Springfield, FCC Lebanon and Twin Oaks Christian Church in Eugene. FCC Eugene continues in a planning process with Dick Hamm as consultant. Several other congregations are working with regional staff or other consultants to identify their goals. Aloha Christian Church is gaining new families now after selling their building and establishing a new place of worship in an industrial park. First Christian Church in Pendleton has started planning and design for a major remodel of their facility, having experienced a recent upsurge in attendance and support. First Christian Church in Portland is in the midst of a major change to their property, partnering with a developer who will build high rise apartments while creating underground parking and other new facilities for the church. First Christian Church in Myrtle Creek closed in 2006, but in 2007 made significant contributions of support to their local food bank, Northwest Christian College and Christian Church in Oregon through their legacy fund.

For the afternoon before our regional assembly in April, Gay Reese, author of *Unbinding the Gospel*, published by Christian Board of Publication, will be leading a four hour training event for leadership for transformation. Elders, pastors and members of congregations have been actively encouraged over the past six months to read the books in this series and come prepared to engage Gay around issues of congregational transformation. This event will also be attended by members of the Methodist churches in Oregon as their annual transformation event.