

TITLE: Report of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

ORIGIN: The Rev. Dani Loving Cartwright, Regional Minister & President

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

Regional Staff:

Rev. Dani Loving Cartwright, Regional Minister & President, female, Caucasian
Andrea Faries, Administrative Assistant, female, Caucasian
Jane Musch, CPA, Regional Accountant, P/T, Contract
Rev. Jorge Torres, Director, Hispanics Ministries, male, Latino, P/T- volunteer
Nathan Higginbotham, Disciples' Men's Ministries, male, Caucasian, volunteer
Rev. Mary Maxine Palmer, Disciples' Women's Ministries, Interim Director, female,
Caucasian, P/T (10 hours per week)

The CCSW functions through eight geographic areas and, though the Areas call their own Area ministers and work through their own boards/councils, these ministers also share ministry in the life of the Region:

Bluebonnet Area (and Lower Rio Grande Valley) - Rev. Dr. John Callison, male, Caucasian
Central Area: Rev. Dr. Tony Salisbury, Area Minister, male, Caucasian
Coastal Plains Area: Rev. Herbert L. Lynskey, Area Minister, male, Caucasian
Rev. Doyle Simpson, Asst. Area Minister, male, Caucasian, P/T
Hi-Plains Area: Rev. Charles "Chuck" Fisher, Area Minister, male, Caucasian
Northeast Area: Rev. Coretha Loughridge, Area Minister, female, Caucasian
North Texas Area: Rev. Larry Ross, Area Minister, male, Caucasian
Rev. Irie Session, Assoc. Area Minister, female,
African-American, P/T
Tres Rios Area: Rev. Charlotte Hoppe, Area Minister, female, Caucasian
Trinity-Brazos Area: Rev. Dr. Kenneth Hall, Area Minister, male, Jamaican

Number of Congregations: 435 (+ or - , depending on the week!)

Total Participating Members: 55, 176 (Participating, 2007 YearBook)

States Included in Region: Texas; New Mexico; a few congregations in the Oklahoma Panhandle; and one congregation in Liberal, Kansas

1. 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 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest is in the middle of a three-year long-range planning process. We have engaged the expertise of The Center for Parish Development to assist us in this journey. The goal of the process is to enable us to support and encourage the ministries of pastors and congregations in the best way possible and to provide them strong interactive connections to the whole church. This *New Day, New Direction* journey is grounded in Bible Study and prayer and conversation among congregations and colleagues around the Region. We are just moving to our “Discovery Conferences” this spring and anticipate the beginning glimpses of how God is calling us to the future as we talk

together!

2. 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?

As we do our work through eight geographic areas, we are discovering that there are possibilities for both new congregations and transformed congregations in each locale.

Each area has 3-10 new congregations within its borders, and each is creatively discovering ways to nurture these congregations, ensuring that in their formative moments that they are born with Disciples DNA. We are delighted that most of these congregations are non-Anglo and are embracing the welcome of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the mission of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

3. In what ways are you partnering with the other expressions of the Church and with other general ministries?

A. We had the incredible opportunity to host the 2007 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. & Canada in Fort Worth, Texas this past July! What an awesome experience of opening our hearts to our Disciples family and providing welcome and hospitality! It was a great experience for our whole Region and we are grateful for the experience to practice Gospel hospitality in the midst of our own!

B. Week of Compassion & Disciples Home Missions are working with us in the Mission Station ministry in Port Arthur and Beaumont, TX, as well as La Casita ministry in Matamoros, Mexico, out of Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries – a DHM mission and the heart of mission ministry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and deep into Mexico!

C. Church Extension is active in every area of our Region in assisting in facility updates, new buildings, and in New Church Ministries.

D. Christian Church Foundation is where we have invested our resources and to whom we turn for assistance for those congregations who want to share their legacies so they have impact for ministry into the future. The ministry that Bobby Hawley and Marilyn Fiddmont share within our Region is incredibly helpful to us and to our congregations! What great partners!

E. Pension Fund has not only enabled excellent pensions for many of our pastors, but is also bringing a new focus to pastor’s self-care and health awareness. Many of our clergy are grateful for the ongoing support they find from Pension Fund.

F. The Office of Ministry, in Disciples Home Missions, is an invaluable resource and assistant to us as we credential clergy and deal with issues of ordination, standing and even misconduct. Many kudos to Warren Lynn and Kelly Harris - they do EXCELLENT work and provide untold support and care for our clergy!

G. Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University and Jarvis Christian College are within our borders and serve on our Regional Council. In addition – and more importantly – we share mutual support

and camaraderie in ministry. Our relationships with these institutions are foundational to who we are and the ministry we share. We are PROUD to claim Dr. Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School, as Moderator for the whole church in this biennium!

H. The Council on Christian Unity is an important influence on our congregations as we live out our desire and need for unity in Christ's church. They have helped us by providing curriculum for conversations about unity and the ecumenical church that were very enlightening for many of our congregations and clergy. Their chair this year, Rev. Andy Mangum, is a pastor at First Christian Church, Arlington, TX, and we celebrate his incredible leadership in ecumenical circles! Way to go, Andy!

I. We began a partnership with Disciples Benevolent Services (NBA) this year to aid them in overcoming issues with the Texas Attorney General and finding ways to use the monies that had been given in the state of Texas for their intended ministry. After much work on our part, we have been greatly disappointed that ½ of the monies for which we prepared a proposal, the NBA has decided to retain. The other ½ of the monies are tied up in the court system in Texas, without much hope for quick release. This was a great disappointment, as we worked diligently to help NBA prepare their proposals.

J. We also celebrate the call of one of our pastors, Dr. Todd Adams, to the role as Associate General Minister and Vice-President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)! This was a sad loss to one of our strong congregations – and yet brings great pride for all of us as we celebrate Todd's leadership and gifts in such a critical time for the life of our church! Our prayers are with you, Todd! Keep up the good work!

K. We continually look for ways to partner with other expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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

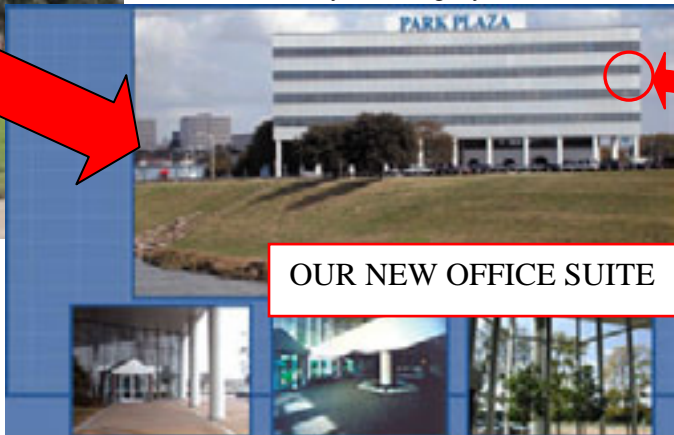
Congregations are the backbone of the ministry that happens in this Region! The opportunities that we have, in each of our geographic areas, to partner with congregations are many and varied. They find their focus in training, teaching, counseling, assisting in planning, drawing leaders together for inspiration and motivation, and helping congregations discover resources and connections to other expressions of the church.

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.



We hurdled a huge barrier this past year as we sold the Regional Office building and moved into an office suite – from 10,000 sq. ft. to 1794 sq. ft.! We are discovering that a new model for ministry can sometimes evolve even as you change your location!

We were able to invest the proceeds with the Christian Church Foundation and provide for future office needs AS WELL AS devote 10% of the annual income to Disciples Mission Fund and 10% of the annual income to mission within the Region!



As we move forward in our *New Day, New Direction* work – we are woefully understaffed to guide an in-depth transformation process **AND** carry on the ministries that congregations and pastors have come to expect. And yet, we are discovering new ways to accomplish ministry and the un-used “people resources” that are abundant in this Region in order to journey through this transition in the best possible ways.

God continually calls us to be a church for today and for tomorrow – meeting our neighbor in mission, sharing together in worship and praise that finds its center at the Lord’s Table, reaching out to those in need nearby and around the world, and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in creative and challenging ways!