

**Title: REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE UPPER MIDWEST**  
**Date: Prepared in April of 2008**  
**Origin: Dr. Richard Guentert, Regional Minister and President**

**Background Data:** For further information visit the Region’s web site at: <http://www.uppermidwestcc.org/>

Regional Staff: (by name, position, gender and ethnic designation)  
Dr. Richard Guentert, Regional Minister and President, Male, Anglo  
Rev. Bill Spangler-Dunning, Assoc. Reg’l Minister for Conf. Cntr. & Education Ministries, Male, Anglo  
Rev. Don Hiscox, Associate Regional Minister, Male, Anglo  
Ms. Caroline Arter, Administrative Assistant, Female, Anglo  
Ms. Roberta Arnett, Administrative Assistant, Female, African American  
Ms. Bert Burns, Administrative Assistant, Female, Anglo  
Mr. Andy Hughes, PT Contract Accountant, Male, Anglo

Number of Congregations: 157      Total Members: 37,425+ (Approx.)      Participating Members: 22,338+ (Approx.)

States Included in the Region:      Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota

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**A REPORT TO THE GENERAL BOARD ON  
THE MINISTRIES OF THE UPPER MIDWEST REGION  
DURING THE PAST YEAR (2007-2008)**

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ANTI-RACISM – PRO-RECONCILIATION

The Anti-Racism Unit is being re-activated and reconstituted since the loss of a number of its members by retirement or ministerial relocation.

The Region continues its historic practice of providing scholarship assistance to seminarians under the care of the Region’s Ministry Commission. It also provides \$2,000 per semester (\$4,000 per year) to the Northeast Region for them to allocate to their ministry care students. In this manner the Upper Midwest Region is expanding its ministry of reconciliation in helping prepare non-anglo clergy leadership for the Church.

A \$4,000 Reconciliation grant was made to AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) to facilitate training 50 minority or low-income leaders in community organizing.

This year we called a new African American Administrative Assistant to work at the Regional Church Center as receptionist and secretary to Rev. Don Hiscox..

The board authorized \$3,000 of our Reconciliation offerings for the building of a home and to provide for the Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries, in Los Fresnos, Texas.

A Reconciliation grant is being utilized to support the *English Language Learning Program* of First Christian Church in Des Moines which works with immigrants and refugees recently arrived in the United States.

A Reconciliation Grant was authorized for *TXT TIME* (Telling Christ’s Truth) a ministry in Marion, Iowa among children of various races.

A Reconciliation grant of \$1,000 was made to “*Montgomery County Teachers and Parents Hispanic Initiative.*” This is a public health service in Red Oak, IA. This grant will expand the services from 12 families to 32 families.

A Reconciliation grant of \$1,500 was made to “*Sentencing Reform in South Dakota.*” This is a ministry of the S.D. Peace and Justice Center. It was requested by First Christian Church of Sioux Falls, S.D.

1 A Reconciliation grant of \$1,000 was made to “*Getting To Know You*” of First Light Christian Fellowship in Marion, IA ...  
2 providing for an interactive approach to dialogue about racism and race relations in Linn County.  
3

4 A Reconciliation grant of \$1,000 was made to “*The DOCs Free Clothing Closet*” at Park Avenue Christian Church, Des  
5 Moines, IA providing for the hurting and the homeless, including teenagers with children and grandparents raising  
6 grandchildren.  
7

8 A Reconciliation Grant was made for a Sidewalk Sunday School Project at Fort Dodge, IA.  
9

## 10 11 CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION 12

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15 A *Congregational Transformation* grant was awarded the Region by the *Oreon E. Scott Foundation* in the amount of \$15,000  
16 for a Region-wide clergy and laity event in May 2008. That event will be keynoted by Rev. Barbara Blaisdell and Rev. Ben  
17 Bohren and will trigger the intentional decision by a number of congregations to work on Congregational Transformation  
18 using a variety of models. The event theme is “Transforming in Troubling Times.” Following this event there will be an  
19 opportunity for a select number of churches to commit to a serious period of work and attentiveness as they engage various  
20 processes of congregational transformation.  
21

## 22 23 24 LEADER DEVELOPMENT & CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION 25

26  
27 The School of Congregational Leaders was held in August of 2007 with over 517 in attendance. Fifty courses of instruction  
28 were offered around the theme: “Reaching Upward, Inward and Outward.” Rev. Dani Loving Cartwright keynoted the event.  
29

30 Dr. Dan Moseley, professor at Christian Theological Seminary was the featured keynoter for two well attended clergy events  
31 during 2007: *The Minister’s Institute* speaking on “For The Blessing of All – Encountering God Within” AND the *Interim*  
32 *Minister’s Retreat* speaking on “Transitions As Times of Transformation.”  
33

34 Two Elder’s retreats and workshops were conducted by Dr. Richard Guentert, Regional Minister – one in the Spring at  
35 Spencer, Iowa and one in the Fall at Chariton, Iowa. There were approximately 30 participants in the first and 70 participants  
36 in the second. Both followed the theme “Before the Table, Behind the Table, Beyond the Table.”  
37

## 38 39 40 LEADER DEVELOPMENT 41

42  
43 Recommended for Ordination to Christian Ministry by the Region’s Ministry Commission during the past year were: Connie  
44 Wacht, Kim Gaston, Tom Johnson, and Brandon Johnson. (See the Ministry Commission report below)  
45

46 The Ministry Commission has framed a resolution for the Regional Assembly to affirm the CONGREGATIONAL polity of  
47 Disciples in choosing who to submit to the Region’s Ministry Commission for ministerial consideration, (REMOVING the  
48 precedent of a previous Regional Assembly action requiring the Region’s Ministry Commission to make that decision using  
49 sexual orientation as one of its criteria.) This will be voted on at the up-coming Regional Assembly, October 11, 2008.  
50

51 The *Minister’s Institute* in 2008 featured Dr. Newell Williams, President and Professor at Brite Divinity School, Texas  
52 Christian University, Ft. Worth, TX, speaking on the theme “Balancing Church and Culture.”  
53

54 The *Woman to Woman Worldwide* mission theme focusing on South Korea was lifted up in many Disciples Women’s  
55 gatherings across the Region with Rev. Emily Guentert making presentations for a good number of them. (Emily was one of  
56 12 Disciples women who made the person-to-person visits to South Korea in November of 2005.)  
57

58 Representatives from the Upper Midwest attended the *Mission Interpreter’s Training* event conducted by *Global Ministries*  
59 in April of 2007 at Lincoln, Nebraska.  
60

61 A two day *Youth Worker Training Event* was held in April of 2007 at the Christian Conference Center

1  
2 Rev. Bill Spangler Dunning has contracted with a select number of individual congregations to do pilot “extended  
3 consultations” on how to build or strengthen youth ministry in the local congregation.  
4

5 A Lenten *Clergy Day Apart* was conducted by the Regional Minister providing participants an unusual way to hear and  
6 experience “*The Mass*” written by Leonard Bernstein.  
7

8 Two Licensed Minister’s Retreats have been offered by the Region’s Ministry Commission during the past year. One was on  
9 the theme “Nuts and Bolts” and was keyed by Revs. Dayna Kinkaid and Amy Spangler-Dunning. (This dealt with the  
10 “how to” of weddings, funerals, parent-child dedications, and other special occasions.) Dr. Richard Guentert keyed the  
11 second retreat on “Christian Ethics and Ministerial Ethics.”  
12

13 Through *Spirit Fests* there are four events held at different sites around the Region each year to introduce Disciples Women  
14 to the New Day periodical, and to other study and organizational resources for the coming year.  
15

16 In August there was an invitation to High School youth to gather and discuss Christian vocation. The *Y.M.I. Event* (Youth  
17 Ministry Invitation) was designed to give youth an opportunity to explore and learn about ways to serve in Ministry.  
18

19 A Fall Retreat for Women of the Region is held each year at Lake Koronis in Minnesota. The 2007 retreat was on the theme  
20 “Come To The Table.”  
21

22 A new spiritual retreat fashioned after Road to Emmaus has been created for Disciples of Christ. It is called WATCH (which  
23 stands for “We Are The Church”). Two of them have been held in the Region this past year and are responsible for a  
24 growing interest in spirituality and discipleship. The first was held as a local church retreat by Dr. John McKinstry at  
25 Coralville Christian Church. Then it was expanded to more participants across the Region in a February reprise of it at the  
26 Christian Conference Center. It seems to be creating a good deal of interest and holds promise for being a good renewal  
27 event in the life of laity.  
28

29 A Disciples Identity dialogue session was convened at the camp as an elective gathering for all clergy and laity interested.  
30

31 A workshop was held in two locations about “Creating A Safe Environment For Children.” This was designed to help  
32 congregations put guidelines, policies and practices in place that would prevent any abuse of boys and girls in the church.  
33

34 A *Licensed Ministers Support Network* met quarterly to provide a place for them to fellowship, share resources, and explore  
35 particular issues or ministry skills that were important to them.  
36

37 A meeting of the Interims of both the UCC and the DOC gather together bi-monthly to focus on concerns that are common to  
38 them in this unique sphere of ministry.  
39

#### 40 41 NEW CHURCH 42 43

44 Emerging Congregation status was granted for New Life Christian Church at Granger, IA and a \$5,000 grant was given them  
45 for publicity and promotion.  
46

47 A \$5,000 grant was made to Peosta Worship Center, Peosta, IA for signage and promotion.  
48

49 The board revoked “emerging church” status from the Liberian Church in Minneapolis as Sam Reeves allowed his Standing  
50 with the Disciples to expire. He left the Region and began a TV ministry from North Carolina.  
51

52 Eleven New Church starts are in various stages of development in the Region.  
53

54 A \$3,000 grant was given to New Hope Christian Church in Pella, IA to explore its outreach to the community and target  
55 potential members.  
56

57 A \$5,000 grant was made to the Korean Dordom Church, St. Louis Park, MN, to provide musical instrumentation for  
58 evangelism.  
59

60 A *Clergy Day Apart* in April featured Charlie Wallace doing presentations on “New Church and Congregational Relations.”  
61

1 A *New Church Planter's* training event was conducted in October 2007 by the General Church, in the Region, for all current  
2 and prospective New Church planters.  
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5

### 6 CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER MINISTRY 7

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9 The Region is conducting a gala celebration April 26<sup>th</sup> of 2008 to mark the Fortieth Anniversary of the Christian Conference  
10 Center ministry. A full day of activities is planned on the site.  
11

12 Fifteen new sleeping beds were purchased for the Retreat House, and the Craft Area was remodeled into a large, all-purpose  
13 *Chalice Room*. An invitation was extended, to all congregations who wished to do so, to provide a wall-chalice or a picture  
14 of one. Now one entire wall of the room is a montage of Disciples Chalices.  
15

16 Summer Camp and Conference Registrations in 2007 were up from 2006 by 50, totaling over 1,000 campers and conferees.  
17

18 Year-round usage of the Conference Center continues to grow. It is now beginning to be more difficult to book the space  
19 unless it is done a year ahead of the desired date.  
20

21 The Region authorized the use of its non-designated reserves to pay-down the \$400,000 mortgage at the Christian Conference  
22 Center. The Mortgage is now less than half what it was.  
23

24 An area of the old dining hall at the Christian Conference Center has been remodeled to provide a very nice suite of rooms  
25 for small family or group over night gatherings.  
26

27 The Region now has a policy with regard to Camp and Conference that "IT WILL NOT TURN AWAY ANY BOY OR GIRL ON THE  
28 BASIS OF THEIR ABILITY TO PAY THE CAMP REGISTRATION FEE." As a result, a number of individuals and congregations have  
29 stepped forward to provide a pool of monies from which those needful situations can be underwritten.  
30

31 The Christian Conference Center provides FREE mid-week retreat accommodations for any clergy of the Region who wish  
32 to spend a couple of days in spiritual meditation, reflection, and prayer.  
33

34 May 5<sup>th</sup> 2007 a "Planting Day and Work Day" were jointly held at the Christian Conference Center for volunteers to  
35 contribute their labor and make connections with this significant ministry of the Region. Two days have been designated  
36 during 2008 for individuals and groups wishing to come and plant flowers that will border, grace and adorn the Prayer Path.  
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### 40 REGIONAL MISSION 41 42

43 The Region hosted dozens of visits to congregations by Doug and Liz Searles – our *Global Mission Partners* from China.  
44 They were superb in each and every presentation.  
45

46 The Region works with 25-30 congregations a year in pastoral transition, providing interim assistance, Search and Call help,  
47 installations, Pastoral Relations Committee orientations, pastoral reviews, and a Region-wide *New Minister's Orientation*.  
48

49 Our ministry includes year-round practical resources for promotion and interpretation of the *Disciples Mission Fund* and each  
50 of the six *Special Day Offerings* (Week of Compassion, Easter, Pentecost, Reconciliation, Thanksgiving, and Christmas).  
51

52 As a mission project the Region collected new, unopened packages of over-the-counter vitamins, cold, flu and nausea  
53 medications and send them to Iraq for distribution by a U.S. Army Chaplain. This was done at the invitation and directive of  
54 military personnel currently serving there.  
55

56 Plans are well underway for the Regional Assembly in October of 2008. It will feature the presence of the musically gifted  
57 Bill Thomas (of General Assembly fame). The preaching task will be shared by a variety of clergy from the Upper Midwest.  
58 The theme is "I See A Church With A Vision – For The Blessing of All." One feature of the Assembly will be the bringing  
59 together of symbols of the giftedness of each congregation represented. This will serve to amplify the Region's vision:  
60 "DISCIPLES TOGETHER, SHARING IN THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S TABLE, FOR THE BLESSING OF ALL."  
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3 GENERAL CHURCH RELATIONS  
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7 We authorized 25 Voting Delegates for the General Assembly in Fort Worth, TX. The Region participated in all aspects of  
8 the General Assembly, but was specially touched by the Chalice Exchange. The Upper Midwest also held a reception during  
9 the event. Participants felt that overall this General Assembly was one of the best they'd ever attended.  
10

11 We were pleased to have our *General Ministry Partner* Dr. Bill Bass of *Church Extension* in the Region on multiple  
12 occasions – including his presentation of regular reports at our Regional Board Meetings. Bill is always welcome.  
13

14 An audit of the Region's books was completed in 2007 for 2006, a copy of which was submitted to the OGMP. An audit of  
15 the Region's books will be completed in 2008 for 2007, a copy of which will be submitted to the OGMP upon its completion.  
16

17 At the February 2008 Regional Board meeting the promotion of *Heartbeats of Faith* campaign was authorized. The Regional  
18 Staff are to encourage congregations to set a goal, to promote the campaign, within the life and ministry of each  
19 congregation.  
20

21 In June of 2007 a Pension Fund representative, Rev. Eugene Fischer, met with clergy of the Upper Midwest to discuss with  
22 them such topics as Pension Fund, Health Care, and the "Heartbeats of Faith" capital campaign.  
23

24 Richard and Emily Guentert spent Palm Sunday and Easter in China, as part of a 16 day tour of 6 major cities – Shanghai,  
25 Nanjing, Hefei, Chengdu, Xian, and Beijing. They traveled there as a contingent of Christians from the Disciples and the  
26 United Church of Christ to behold first-hand what is being supported with our *Disciples Mission Fund* dollars – to experience  
27 the partnership ministry of the DOCs and UCCs – to observe how the resources distributed through the auspices of *Global*  
28 *Ministries really do* make possible our "critical presence" in the life of the Chinese Church. They have much to share with  
29 the churches of the Upper Midwest Region about the marvelous work of Global Ministries about which Disciples have reason  
30 to be proud.  
31

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33 OPERATIONAL MATTERS  
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38 We moved to a web-based Search and Call System and implemented the Oxford Document background check system for all  
39 licensed and ordained clergy.  
40

41 Not counting depreciation, the Regional Board adopted a nearly balanced budget (within \$366) for the 2008 year.  
42

43 A *Capital Fund-Raising Ministry* Task Force has been authorized by the Regional Board. This is different from a Capital  
44 Campaign since it will be an on-going year-round ministry of the Region, directed at seeking gifts from individuals for  
45 various Regional and General ministry projects.  
46

47 The Personnel Unit of the Region is in the process of doing a complete overhaul of its *Personnel Policy*. The policy has not  
48 been reworked since the 1990s when the Region had a larger Regional staff.  
49

50 A new *Communication Task Group* was appointed to look at all the Region's communications systems and processes. It did  
51 a Region-wide survey and is presently redesigning the Regional Website on the basis of the feedback it received. You may  
52 visit it at <http://www.uppermidwestcc.org/>  
53

54 Communication tools of the Region currently include *The Christian News* (five issues per year), *Infopak.doc* (A monthly  
55 packet of materials mailed to all congregations), a List-Serve called *Disciples Together* (making possible immediate  
56 communications by any lay or clergy Disciples in the Region to large contingent of fellow Disciples), and the Region's  
57 website at <http://www.uppermidwestcc.org/> .  
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3 MINISTRY COMMISSION DATA FOR THE YEAR  
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7 Licensed and Ordained Clergy certified with Standing and under the Region's Ministry Commission – 270 persons  
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10 Operated a three-year *Licensed Ministry Education Program* – with 35 students currently in the program

11 Received new into the *Licensed Ministry Education Program* – 6 persons

12 Certified as completing the *Licensed Ministry Education Program* – 10 persons

13 In-care Interviews with Licensed Ministers currently serving churches – 11 persons

14 Granted *Licensed Minister Emeritus* status – 1 person  
15

16 Recognition of Ordination Credentials from another denomination – 3

17 Recognition of Dual Standing with a UCC Clergy – 1

18 Temporary License extended to a candidate under consideration – 1

19 Review of Standing for Ethical Misconduct Charges – 2  
20

21 Total Number of Seminarian Related to Upper Midwest Ministry Commission – 10

22 Total number of Undergraduates under-care and on a ministry track – 4

23 Licensed for congregational service while attending Seminary – 1

24 Students received under-care of the Region upon entering Seminary – 2

25 Middler Interviews with current Upper Midwest Seminarians – 3

26 Seminarians granted certification for Ordination to Ministry – 4

27 Services of Ordination Conducted – 4  
28

29 Scholarship Dollars Disseminated to Undergrads and Seminarians from the Region & Sponsoring Congregations – \$ 38,067  
30