

**Report to the General Board  
Church Extension  
March, 2008**

**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)?**

Church Extension understands the primary role of general ministries to be that of strengthening congregations to be and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. To this end, Church Extension's mission is to ensure mission-effective capital funding for Disciples congregations. Through partnership with Disciples investors and donors, CE shares expertise, services, and resources that seek to help congregations find the intersections between their mission and their location, context and facilities.

With new congregations, and through the partnership with the whole church, CE makes certain that visions for sustainable ministry fit the needs of the contexts where they are targeted. With congregations that are building initial buildings, CE staff accompanies congregations to make sure that facilities meet the needs of mission, that funding for the projects can be raised, and that loans for the projects are within the means of congregations. In congregations where remodeling and renovation are taking place, CE staff coaches congregations to do so in ways that fit the ministry objectives of Disciples of Christ trying to reach into the places and neighborhoods they seek to serve. Most recently, Church Extension (through generous gifts from individual donors and grants) has developed New Beginnings, an assessment service to try to help declining congregations preserve their assets for ministry rather than spend them on outdated or oversized buildings that no longer meet their needs.

In fact, CE believes that it has an obligation to all of the donors and investors who make this portion of Disciples ministry possible to update all of its building planning and capital fund raising services. We are in our second year of this process. In addition, CE knows that what worked for congregations in the past, no longer works in the same ways. Because our congregations are not one-size-fits-all congregations, we must offer multiple means of engaging in the fund raising, building planning and financial assessments.

Finally, CE is committed to working with Disciples congregations (through financial planning, fund raising, and with loan services) who cannot easily achieve their funding elsewhere. For 125 years, CE has been the church's conduit of "peer to peer" lending—allowing congregations to build facilities when no other institution would support them. For 125 years, CE has been a vessel through which Disciples investors and donors have supported other Disciples in beginning ministry, expanding mission and building facilities that support the mission stations of Disciples witness. It is both a short and long term passion of those called to staff to continue the partnership and mission for which the whole church called CE into being in 1883.

**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?**

Church Extension is privileged to be the general ministry that houses New Church Ministry for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in partnership with regions and congregations across the U.S. and Canada. CE provides administrative, marketing, and other services for the ministry. While a good portion of the expenditures for the New Church Ministry movement in the Christian Church comes from Disciples Mission Fund and the special Pentecost Offering, Church Extension (along with many other donors) offers financial support to sustain the staff levels necessary to adequately resource the movement. In 2007 Church Extension, through its donors and other sources, underwrote \$171,000 in cash for operating costs to New Church Ministry.

In that it is a priority of the whole church, the New Church team makes its own report to the General Board; the details of New Church success and operations will be contained in that document.

Besides CE's long-standing passion for and support of New Church Ministry, CE staff and directors have long believed in the importance of supporting all of the priorities of the church through our work and witness. Helping congregations sustain and find new life is the "transformational" ministry to which all general ministries are called. CE's specific task is to ensure that buildings help facilitate mission; that they don't drain congregations of their ability to do mission but rather enhance that ability. To this end, all of the consultations engaged in by CE ask the "mission" questions first. Then, the building and loan services questions follow. CE seeks to help congregations adapt their mission, ministries and facilities to the changing culture and times in ways that bring continual transformation. In addition, the New Beginnings Assessment service helps congregations assess readiness for redevelopment.

In its continuing commitment to the anti-racism, pro-reconciliation goals of the Disciples, Church Extension has committed itself to facilitating services that fit the racial/ethnic contexts of all Disciples congregations in terms of language, social/cultural dynamics and theological perspective. One example of this is the development of the new "Mustard Seed" fund raising process which is currently being piloted in a number of congregations. The aim is to provide fund raising vehicles that are functional within various racial/ethnic congregational contexts, and respectful of cultural norms and expectations.

In addition, CE (in partnership with Reconciliation) continues to sponsor annual anti-racism training for all of its directors, staff and for other Disciples entities who wish to participate. CE believes that dismantling racism is not only about exposing people to a common historical analysis of the ways racist systems were formed, but about creating different communities with multiple forms and structures of service that allow ministry to extend to all of God's people.

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

Church Extension works directly with congregations, regions and individuals, working in partnership with other general ministries where appropriate. The first line of our mission statement reminds us daily that the New Church Ministry and Church Extension staff (while bringing to bear the expertise learned through experience with trusted congregational partners) offers services because Disciples congregations and individuals invest and give money to aid in whole church witness.

Most every congregational consultation is done with the knowledge of and often the presence of regional partners. In many cases, regional partners are offering guarantees or holding title for new church property. Regional and general partners increasingly offer the ministry planning necessary to engage in successful capital projects. Without partnerships with racial/ethnic constituency group leaders, neither the new church movement nor ministries to existing congregations would have the support necessary for faithful and effective witness. Likewise, CE takes seriously the priorities set by the OGMP and the General Assembly as we seek to adapt our mission together in these changing times; we value the presence and representation from OGMP staff on our board of directors.

### **4. How has your ministry served to strengthen congregations for mission?**

Our mission statement reads:

*Called by God, Church Extension, together with our investors and partners, offers mission-driven planning and capital-funding services to Disciples of Christ congregations in the context of their culture and stage of life.*

Church Extension is involved daily with congregations, helping them share knowledge, identify needs and opportunities, and succeed in their mission and ministry. We do this through training, consultative services, loans, investment opportunities, assessments and more. We do not exist apart from a mission to

strengthen congregations “to be and to share the good news of Jesus Christ from their doorsteps to the ends of the earth.”

In 2007 Church Extension staff visited and worked with nearly 500 congregations. CE approved 67 loans, amounting to more than \$20 million, for the congregations we serve. As of the close of 2007, Church Extension has more than \$150 million loaned to congregations and other Disciples entities, all made possible through the investments and donations of Disciples of Christ congregations, individuals and institutions.

Church Extension attracted nearly \$21 million in investments from individual Disciples, congregations, and Disciples institutions during the year, making the total of funds invested more than \$145 million.

During 2007, Church Extension, through New Church Ministry, partnered with regions, congregations, church planters, donors, and other general ministries to achieve 107 new Disciples communities of faith.

Gifts and grants to the various Church Extension Funds were more than \$1.7 million during the year.

#### *Specific Accomplishments in New Initiatives*

In 2007, 100 congregations participated in New Beginnings assessments. These assessments engaged congregations in decisions about directions they could move to utilize their resources for different kinds of mission, to match ministries to changing contexts/neighborhoods, and to determine facilities capacity needs in their changing contexts.

The “Green Building” service and initiative was developed and launched in pilot congregations. Pilot projects in both Anglo and ethnic congregations are producing assessment tools to allow congregations to save operational costs for utilities, save energy, engage in environmental stewardship, and preserve resources for mission.

As mentioned, CE is also piloting a new fund raising service for African American and Hispanic congregations. Once this service has been successfully launched, the hope is to expand the service to other racial/ethnic faith communities. In addition, CE made major revisions to its current fund raising service (which has primarily served Anglo congregations) to better adapt current fund raising thought to the needs and styles of congregational stewardship.

Finally, CE is working to prepare and support new congregations in acquiring or building “first sites.” This Building Readiness initiative should be launched by January, 2009.

On behalf of the whole church, the staff and directors of Church Extension continue to feel both the call and the privilege of serving congregations. It is with grateful hearts that we offer this report.