

Title: **Report of Christian Church in Arizona**

Origin: Dennis L. Williams, Regional Minister and President

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

Regional Staff: Dennis L. Williams – M; Kim Behm – F; Job Cobos – Hispanic M; Carol Friesen – F; Lea Nessmith – F; Heather Patriacca – F; Lyn Saint-Erne - F

Number of Congregations: 22 + 9 in formation and affiliation

Total Members: 4010

States included in Region: Arizona

**AS STATED IN PARAGRAPH 20 OF THE DESIGN, THE ARIZONA REIGON IS RESPONDING IN THESE WAYS:**

***How does the region extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness and service among people and social structures of the region?***

The Region in its' recent strategic planning has identified the a "One Region Many Ministries Priority" which has called for a Reconciliation/Anti-Racism focus in all of our ministries and charged that ministry with identifying a five year plan that will impact all of our regional ministries and provide a similar initiative to all of our congregations.

The focus of this past years assembly was "Church on the Edge: Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World" Keynoters Alvin Jackson and Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi. Both keynoters provided challenge and insight into our calling as congregations and Christians to teach witness and be in service on the edge. It was a calling to ministry to those on the borders, boundaries and edges and to be a movement for wholeness in those places. Additional workshops by Dr. Cardoza-Orlanzi, John Bell, Gary Straub, Bob Shebeck and others provided resource for "Leading with Boldness", Theology of Migration, Ideas for Sustaining the World, Being a Global Mission Congregation, Being a Welcome Table, and being a Movement for Peace.

The Arizona Region has partnered with Disciples in Mexico in the establishment of a new congregation in Nogales, Sonora Mexico. This partnership has included numerous work trips and substantial funding to move towards completion of the initial building and a new sanctuary space. The completion of these facilities is expected this spring and with it the ability for the congregation to use their facilities for increased mission as well as worship. We are currently in the process of evaluating the possible next stages of this partnership as well as determining ways for the region to partner with our UCC conference in ministry on the border and with our churches in Mexico.

***How does the region establish, receive and nurture congregations, providing help, counsel and pastoral care to members, pastors and congregations in their mutual relationships, relating to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church?***

The Arizona Region and its churches continue to place a high priority on establishing and affiliating new congregations. There are currently nine congregations in formation or affiliation that are very diverse in form and ethnicity. During the past year we have affiliated a joint UCC-Disciple congregation and in the final stage of affiliating a Haitian congregation. The New Church Ministry is currently working toward a Jubilee Plan that would provide both financial and program and ministry resources to move our congregations in formation to a place of self sustaining ministry and chartering.

The nurture, vitality and transformation of congregations are central to the mission of the Arizona Region. The Arizona Region has partnered with congregations to do this in a variety of ways.

1. The Region along with Church Extension worked with six congregations in the New Beginnings Assessment. The initial assessment led the congregations to make a variety of decisions about their future that included:

merging or uniting, relocation, radical revisioning of mission, building new facilities and remodeling for a new mission. The region has worked with these congregations to provide coaching and “next step” funding for programs and ministries consistent with their new beginnings future.

2. Providing Ongoing Congregational Vitality Grants- These grants have enabled a joint television and print advertising campaign for Disciple congregations in the Tucson area, launching of a new care ministry in a congregation, helping resource a Phoenix young adult ministry.
3. The Region has now worked with 90% of our congregations in some sort of congregation transformation or vitality process. Additional efforts have included George Bullard’s Spiritual Strategic Journey Process, Gay Reese’s Unbinding the Gospel, and workshops with Dick Hamm and Tom Bandy.
4. Resourcing leaders and congregations through an ongoing offering of training, sharing of resources, information and conversation at twice yearly “Pastor-Rep” gatherings. This sharing is extended through a monthly web-based communication Pastor-Rep.Net. This site provides a sharing and networking of resources, programs and ministries and a forum for congregational and regional information, questions and concerns.
5. Nurture and Resourcing of Pastors through monthly covenant groups, and quarterly Clergy leadership, education and resource gatherings. This year’s events include a mid-Lenten one day retreat and a May clergy retreat with Alice Mann from Alban Institute.

***What is needed to make these efforts more effective?***

1. A comprehensive, coordinated, focused ministry for congregational transformation at the General level.

**CURRENT GOALS RELATED TO THE CHURCH’S MISSION AND VISION**

The Mission of the Arizona Region is “To create an environment and relationships in which leaders and congregations are called and equipped for congregational ministries that are transforming, growing and faithful”. We have understood this as an echo of the Mission and Vision of the whole church. As the region seeks to do this mission, we have this year approved some priorities around this mission and the mission and vision of the whole church.

These include:

1. Developing and implementing a five strategy for multi-cultural/reconciliation/anti-racism that will impact all of our regional ministries including training of regional leadership, clergy, and ministry team members and involve a congregational strategy.
2. Continue to work at our ministries with the principle of One Region-One Mission-Many Ministries. This calls for all of our ministries, including Hispanic, Women, Youth, New Church, etc to work towards being expressions of One Regional Church.

**PARTICULAR HIGHLIGHTS OR CHALLENGES**

As is true for most of the church, our challenges include finding the best ways to continue our staff, ministry and mission as the region worked to deal with a major reduction income from our endowed funds and other sources. We have worked at this challenge through reductions in expense and working toward more intensive and intentional fundraising and DMF promotion.

**Recommended Action:**

The General Board receives the report from the Arizona Region.