

General Board Report
The Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Barbara E. Jones, Executive Regional Minister

The bulk of this report was presented and adopted in my “State of the Church” presentation at our November 2008 Regional Assembly. It is significant to include for the following reasons:

- 1) It marks the end of our “transition into” the Great River Region by adoption of how we have discovered our identity and ministry to be as opposed to implementing the “greatest common denominator” document that brought us together.
- 2) It documents that even though we have not been living into the document into which we merged, we were living into Nonprofit Best Practices.
- 3) It illustrates how all entities in the region relate – which was never quite understood in their previous regions, let alone the new one, and
- 4) It moved the board from a representative body to a governance body.

With respect to operating finances, we ended our fiscal year in the red by about \$50,000 which was directly related to four factors:

- 1) We had to pay taxes in a lawsuit in Louisiana and are now fighting to get them back,
- 2) We did not withdraw funds from investments which usually cover specific operating expenses like youth ministry,
- 3) We held our expenses to 77% of what was conservatively budgeted, but our income was only 68% of that same conservative budget. The difference was in one or two designated gifts that usually arrive at some time during the year, unpredictably when we need them, ranging between \$10,000 and \$17,000 each, and
- 4) One of our congregations held 28,000 of 2007 and 2008 DMF giving as they went through a battle between Disciples Heritage Fellowship and remaining affiliated with the Disciples of Christ.

The Great River Region participates directly in General Church activities and inter-regional activities. At our February 2009 board meeting we voted to become a Global Mission Region and to partner with the Dominican Republic.

We remain grateful for continued recovery work throughout the Gulf coast and the support of Disciples across the United States and Canada. The Westside Mission Center will remain as on ongoing ministry across the river from New Orleans even as the three year Week of Compassion grant ends April 30. The region will pick up Vance Moore as a staff member with additional regional responsibilities, continue to work with Office of Disciples Volunteers, existing mission groups from Disciples and other denominations. We will be submitting grants to find an onsite person to serve as a host, chaplain, and onsite manager as those funds are no longer available through Week of Compassion. We have a pastor lined up for Westside Christian Church who does not need to use the parsonage, so we can provide a beautiful F-4 hurricane proof home donated by Platinum Industries and gifts from the region and congregations in the region. It was

a demo home that Platinum Industries framed up for construction manager training on our site. We put about \$70,000 into it, and it's value is \$250,000 in the CURRENT market.

We also joined with New Beginnings at our February board meeting to roll out the New Beginnings project throughout the Great River Region this year.

Without further ado, I will add the information provided in my state of the church address to the 3rd Regional Assembly of the Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), held November 7-9, 2008.

Note about approved changes in Bylaws:

Changes timing of the board meeting prior to Regional Assembly (from 40 days to 21 days).

- Rationale: the use of computers and electronic communication make turn-around time from the Board to the Assembly much easier and quicker

Changes General Board Representatives residing in the Region from officer status to Board Member.

- Rationale: GB Reps report to the Regional Board, have not generally responded to Executive Committee meeting notices or votes, and have GB meeting and committee responsibilities beyond the regional board.

Clarifies voting status of Executive Regional Minister on Executive Committee.

- Rationale: ERM is an officer of the region

Independent Sector Principles of Best Practices in Nonprofit Governance

Legal Compliance and Public Disclosure Principles	GRR Comparison
1. A charitable organization must comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, as well as applicable laws and regulations of the states and the local jurisdictions in which it is based or operates. If the organization conducts programs outside the United States, it must also abide by applicable international laws, regulations and conventions that are legally binding on the United States.	Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws state that the GRR must abide by applicable laws of local, state and federal governments.
2. A charitable organization should have a formally adopted, written code of ethics with which all of its directors or trustees, staff and volunteers are familiar and to which they adhere.	The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (CCDOC) has a written code of ethics for ministers which is used throughout the GRR. However there is not one for board, staff and volunteers.
3. A charitable organization should adopt and implement policies and procedures to ensure that all conflicts of interest, or the appearance thereof, within the organization and the board are appropriately managed through disclosure, recusal, or other means.	The general board of the CCDOC uses a form to disclose and manage conflicts of interest within the organization and board. The GRR does will do so with the incoming board.

<p>4. A charitable organization should establish and implement policies and procedures that enable individuals to come forward with information on illegal practices or violations of organizational policies. This “whistleblower” policy should specify that the organization will not retaliate against, and will protect the confidentiality of, individuals who make good-faith reports.</p>	<p>The GRR has a grievance policy within its personnel manual that can be adapted for more general use, but there is no “whistleblower” policy anywhere within the region’s bylaws or operating guidelines.</p>
<p>5. A charitable organization should establish and implement policies and procedures to protect and preserve the organization’s important documents and business records.</p>	<p>The GRR has policies and procedures in place to protect and preserve important documents and business records.</p>
<p>6. A charitable organization’s board should ensure that the organization has adequate plans to protect its assets—its property, financial and human resources, programmatic content and material, and its integrity and reputation—against damage or loss. The board should review regularly the organization’s need for general liability and directors’ and officers’ liability insurance, as well as take other actions necessary to mitigate risks.</p>	<p>The GRR has adequate safety and risk management plans in place as well as appropriate general liability and directors and officers liability insurance. The region also has a crisis management plan in place.</p>
<p>7. A charitable organization should make information about its operations, including its governance, finances, programs, and activities, widely available to the public. Charitable organizations also should consider making information available on the methods they use to evaluate the outcomes of their work and sharing the results of those evaluations.</p>	<p>The GRR makes information available to its constituents. Each Annual Report includes a summary of all decisions, activities, status of issues in the region and its audit. The annual report also includes a sample of evaluations done through the year of staff, programs, or initiatives.</p>
<p>Effective Governance Principles</p>	<p>GRR Comparison</p>
<p>8. A charitable organization must have a governing body that is responsible for reviewing and approving the organization’s mission and strategic direction, annual budget and key financial transactions, compensation practices and policies, and fiscal and governance policies.</p>	<p>The GRR has a regional board charged with these responsibilities.</p>
<p>9. The board of a charitable organization should meet regularly enough to conduct its business and fulfill its duties.</p>	<p>The bylaws of the GRR state a minimum of two board meetings a year, but the board feels that quarterly is more helpful. Two of these are online.</p>
<p>10. The board of a charitable organization should establish its own size and structure and review these periodically. The board should have enough members to allow for full deliberation and diversity of thinking on governance and other organizational matters. Except for very small organizations, this</p>	<p>The GRR establishes it’s own size and structure and reviews them. With 23 voting members, it is a very large board. However, since we have no regional committees, this size works well</p>

<p>generally means that the board should have at least five members.</p>	
<p>11. The board of a charitable organization should include members with the diverse background (including, but not limited to, ethnic, racial, and gender perspectives), experience, and organizational and financial skills necessary to advance the organization's mission.</p>	<p>The GRR board has principles for diversity.</p>
<p>12. A substantial majority of the board of a public charity, usually meaning at least two-thirds of the members, should be independent. Independent members should not: (1) be compensated by the organization as employees or independent contractors; (2) have their compensation determined by individuals who are compensated by the organization; (3) receive, directly or indirectly, material financial benefits from the organization except as a member of the charitable class served by the organization; or (4) be related to anyone described above (as a spouse, sibling, parent, or child) or reside with any person so described.</p>	<p>The voting membership of the GRR board is completely independent.</p>
<p>13. The board should hire, oversee, and annually evaluate the performance of the chief executive officer of the organization, and should conduct such an evaluation prior to any change in that officer's compensation, unless there is a multi-year contract in force or the change consists solely of routine adjustments for inflation or cost of living</p>	<p>The evaluation of the GRR executive regional minister has varied over the years. The Executive Committee serves as the personnel committee and is closely informed of personnel issues regarding the ERM or her staff. All members of the Executive Committee are notified and/or consulted when the ERM has a personal or professional issue that could affect her work.</p>
<p>14. The board of a charitable organization that has paid staff should ensure that the positions of chief staff officer, board chair, and board treasurer are held by separate individuals. Organizations without paid staff should ensure that the positions of board chair and treasurer are held by separate individuals.</p>	<p>CEO, Board chair and board treasurer are held by separate individuals.</p>
<p>15. The board should establish an effective, systematic process for educating and communicating with board members to ensure that they are aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities, are knowledgeable about the programs and activities of the organization, and can carry out their oversight functions effectively.</p>	<p>The GRR Board provides orientation at the beginning of each term and provides all documents in a notebook. All corporate documents are included in board dockets on a meeting by meeting basis. Ongoing education is handled meeting to meeting.</p>

16. Board members should evaluate their performance as a group and as individuals no less frequently than every three years, and should have clear procedures for removing board members who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities.	The Bylaws state removal procedure for board members. However, the board has been reluctant to implement.
17. The board should establish clear policies and procedures setting the length of terms and the number of consecutive terms a board member may serve.	The GRR has clear policies and procedures setting length of term and number of consecutive terms.
18. The board should review organizational and governing instruments no less frequently than every five years.	The GRR board reviews governance on a regular basis.
19. The board should establish and review regularly the organization's mission and goals and should evaluate, no less frequently than every five years, the organization's programs, goals and activities to be sure they advance its mission and make prudent use of its resources.	The GRR board reviews mission and goals frequently.
20. Board members are generally expected to serve without compensation, other than reimbursement for expenses incurred to fulfill their board duties. A charitable organization that provides compensation to its board members should use appropriate comparability data to determine the amount to be paid, document the decision and provide full disclosure to anyone, upon request, of the amount and rationale for the compensation.	GRR Board members serve without compensation. Often they donate their expenses, but reimbursement is made as per policy.
Strong Financial Oversight	GRR Comparison
21. A charitable organization must keep complete, current, and accurate financial records. Its board should receive and review timely reports of the organization's financial activities and should have a qualified, independent financial expert audit or review these statements annually in a manner appropriate to the organization's size and scale of operations.	The GRR keeps complete, current and accurate financial records. Reports are made at each board meeting, and an annual audit is done.
22. The board of a charitable organization must institute policies and procedures to ensure that the organization (and, if applicable, its subsidiaries) manages and invests its funds responsibly, in accordance with all legal requirements. The full board should review and approve the organization's annual budget and should monitor actual performance against the budget.	The GRR has clear investment policies and oversight of those policies by the board. The annual budget is approved and monitored by the board on a quarterly basis.
23. A charitable organization should not provide loans (or the equivalent, such as loan guarantees,	The GRR does not provide loans or the equivalent to directors, officers, or

purchasing or transferring ownership of a residence or office, or relieving a debt or lease obligation)to directors, officers, or trustees.	trustees.
24. A charitable organization should spend a significant percentage of its annual budget on programs that pursue its mission. The budget should also provide sufficient resources for effective administration of the organization, and, if it solicits contributions, for appropriate fundraising activities.	The GRR budget is in compliance.
25. A charitable organization should establish clear, written policies for paying or reimbursing expenses incurred by anyone conducting business or traveling on behalf of the organization, including types of expenses that can be paid for or reimbursed and the documentation required. Such policies should require that travel on behalf of the organization is to be undertaken in a cost-effective manner.	The GRR has clear, written polices for paying or reimbursing business and travel expenses, and attention is given to cost effectiveness of travel.
26. A charitable organization should neither pay for nor reimburse travel expenditures for spouses, dependents or others who are accompanying someone conducting business for the organization unless they, too, are conducting such business.	The GRR does not pay for nor reimburse travel expenditures for spouses, dependents or others who are accompanying someone doing regional business.
Responsible Fundraising	GRR Comparison
27. Solicitation materials and other communications addressed to donors and the public must clearly identify the organization and be accurate and truthful.	Regional communications clearly and accurately identify the region and purposes for the communication or solicitation.
28. Contributions must be used the purposes consistent with the donor’s intent, whether as described in the relevant solicitation materials or as specifically directed by the donor.	Contributions are accurately recorded, monitored and used as per donor’s intent.
29. A charitable organization must provide donors with specific acknowledgements of charitable contributions, in accordance with IRS requirements, as well as information to facilitate the donors’ compliance with tax law requirements.	The GRR acknowledges charitable contributions upon receipt in accordance with IRS requirements and facilitates donor compliance with tax law requirements.
30. A charitable organization should adopt clear policies, based on its specific exempt purpose, to determine whether accepting a gift would compromise its ethics, financial circumstances, program focus or other interests.	The GRR states in its investment policies that it will not accept gifts that could compromise its ethics, financial circumstances, program focus or other interests.
31. A charitable organization should provide appropriate training and supervision of the people soliciting funds on its behalf to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and applicable federal, state and local laws, and do not employ	The GRR has not yet established a program of soliciting funds beyond the common denominational fundraising programs. This is an important step the GRR must take. Christian Church

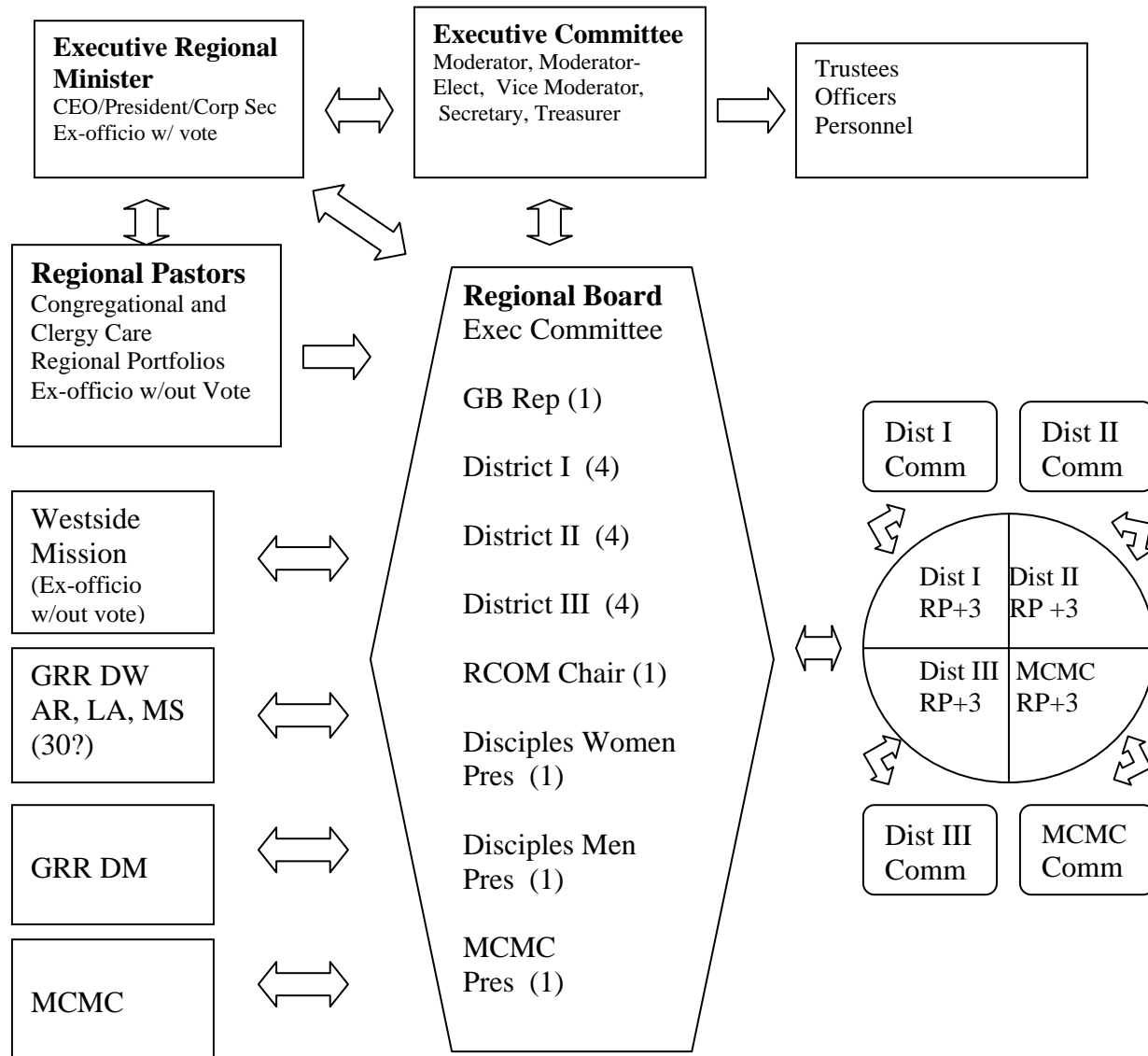
techniques that are coercive, intimidating, or intended to harass potential donors.	Foundation awaits our call for this planning.
32. A charitable organization should not compensate internal or external fundraisers based on a commission or a percentage of the amount raised.	The GRR does not compensate fundraisers based on commission or percentage of amount raised.
33. A charitable organization should respect the privacy of individual donors and, except where disclosure is required by law, should not sell or otherwise make available the names and contact information of its donors without providing them an opportunity at least once a year to opt out of the use of their names	The GRR does not use or share the names of its donors except where required by law.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report of the Great River Region.

Board Schematic:

Voting Members: 23 Quorum: 12



Agenda for each Board Meeting

Board Committee	Task	Skills	Members
<i>Session I</i>			
Finance & Investment	stewardship, budget, fiscal accountability, investments promotion	Accounting Business background History with region	Treasurer, Chair ERM 1 from each Dist
Mission	Network mission of the region, congregations and general church, disburse Reconciliation grants, educate congregations about being missional church, utilize DOC resources	Awareness of Missional Church model, networking, communication, encouragement	Secretary, Chair Regional Pastor 1 from each Dist DW President
New Congregations	Contact, support and encourage creation of new church starts, review reports on each	Experience with new church, knowledge of NCM,	Mod-Elect, Chair Regional Pastor 1 from each Dist DM President
Nominating & governance	Continual review of regions' priorities and how they are/could be met, policies and procedures, fill slate of officers and board	Knowledge of regional ministries Nonprofit experience Review board's work and orientation for new board members	Moderator, Chair Regional Pastor 1 from each Dist MCMC Pres
<i>Session II</i>			
Fellowship Groups	Sharing activities and processes with each other, review plans for year, make sure calendar includes all events	Knowledge of youth, women and men's programs across the church Planning and implementation	RP's Youth Coord. MCMC Pres DW Pres DM Pres At-Large memb.
Executive Committee	Personnel, Trustees, oversight of region	See operating guidelines	Mod, Mod-Elect, Vice Mod, Sec, Treas, ERM
<i>Session III: Total Board – Address action items</i>			

Perpetual Regional Calendar

November 2008 Regional Assembly: FCC Bentonville AR	December 2008	January 2009 RCOM DM Retreat CYF MidWinter Mssn	February 2009 Regional Board GRRDW Joint Cab.
March 2009 CYF Snoasis	April 2009 DW Workshops	May 2009 DW Workshops	June 2009 Online Board CAMP/Conference
July 2009 Camp/Conference General Assembly	August 2008 RCOM	September 2009 Ministers Retreat	October 2009 Regional Board ✳ Fall Fandango
November 2009	December 2009	January 2010 RCOM DM Retreat CYF MidWinter Mssn	February 2010 Regional Board GRRDW Joint Cab
March 2010 CYF Snoasis	April 2010 DW Workshops	May 2010 DW Workshops	June 2010 Online Board
July 2010 National Convocation	August 2010 RCOM	September 2010 Ministers Retreat	October 2010 Regional Board ✳ Fall Fandango
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July 2011 Camp/Conference General Assembly	August 2011	September 2011 Ministers Retreat	October 2011 Regional Board ✳ Fall Fandango
November 2011	December 2011	January 2012 RCOM DM Retreat Youth MidWinter	February 2012 Regional Board GRRDW Joint Cab
March 2012 CYF Snoasis	April 2012 DW Workshops	May 2012 DW Workshops	June 2012 Online Board
July 2012 National Convocation	August 2012	September 2012 Ministers Retreat	October 2012 Regional Board ✳ Fall Fandango
November 2012 Regional Assembly Real Faith –tent inv.	Events that vary from year to year: ARDW, MSDW, LADW Retreats		

Great River Region: Care to Clergy and Congregations **Received by board May 2008**

Regional Pastors

One half of each Regional Pastor's portfolio is to be care to clergy and congregations. This reflects the priority of the Great River Region to provide one on one contact and care for the clergy in the region. Given the increasing cost of gasoline and rising costs throughout the economy, we are shifting some expectations toward increased use of phone, email and greeting card contact with clergy. The following is a reminder of expectations for regional pastors.

With respect to caring for clergy, each regional pastor is expected to:

- Establish and maintain a pastoral relationship with each clergy person residing in and/or serving in his/her area of responsibility.
- Know each clergy person's professional and personal preparation and passion for ministry, goals for ministry, needs and areas of growth.
- Honor each clergy person's confidentiality, sharing in CURRENTS only with permission.
- Pray with the clergy person as often as appropriate and for the clergy person in private devotional time.
- Know their family situation and offer support and resources as needed.
- Have pastoral phone contact with each pastor at least three times a year. This does not include calls about other topics, events, etc.
- Send notes and cards to recognize significant dates: ordination, birthday, anniversaries, death in immediate family.
- At least one pastoral call a year – in person, one on one (can be a hospital visit, but visits at meetings don't count)
- Personal visit to clergy who are in the hospital
- In the event of crisis in the congregation's community (fire, flood, explosion, storm, violent event, accident, etc) the regional pastor will call the congregational pastor within four hours or as soon as communication is re-established to discover the status of the pastor and his/her family, the church building, congregational members, and the community. A report will be made directly to the Executive Regional Minister so that appropriate communication may be made across the region and denomination.

With respect to caring for congregations, each regional pastor is expected to:

- Preach in or worship with each congregation in their care once a year.
- Assist with finding and/or providing resources for the congregation and its ministry.
- Know the elected leadership and have at least one conversation a year with the moderator or board chair.
- Participate in special events of the congregation when possible.
- Officiate at covenant of call / installation services.
- Other activities as appropriate for that congregation.

With respect to Regional Committee on Ministry:

- Facilitate the work of assigned sub-committee and oversee the paperwork process for candidacy of ministers assigned to their care.
- Participate in regional ministry committee.