



Report of the Christian Church in Indiana

to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the United States and Canada 2009

Richard L. Spleth, Regional Minister

Regional Staff

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Cheryl Cloar, Minister of Mission and Women’s Ministries	F	
Sharon Stribling, Executive Assistant	F	
Vonnie Cloud, Events Coordinator	F	
Melissa Carlson, Accountant	F	
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Terry Best, Co-Manager, Camp Barbee	M	
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Number of Congregations: 185

Total Participating Members: 33,000

States included in Region: Indiana

Our mission is
to energize and connect congregations
to proclaim the gospel and
make disciples of Jesus Christ

We accomplish this mission by equipping congregations to
 promote health and growth
 cultivate spiritual formation and discipleship
 call out and develop passionate leaders
 plant new congregations
 claim God’s unique mission for them

1. Information regarding how your region has fulfilled the region’s primary purpose as stated in paragraph 20 of *The Design*.

. . .extending the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region

The region primarily seeks to extend the ministry of Christ by equipping congregations to operate at their best capacity in mission, teaching, witness and service. We provide opportunities to explore new ministry options both by offering our own workshops and connecting ministers and congregations to each other. We represent the churches collectively to the ecumenical, governmental and social structures of the state.

. . .establishing, receiving, and nurturing congregations in the region, providing help, counsel and pastoral care to members, ministers and congregations in their mutual relationships, and relating them to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church.

As a region we are engaged in the process of assisting new congregations as they come to life, helping existing congregations discover and claim their mission for this time and in guiding congregations at the end of their days come to a graceful end of their ministries. We have a team of 17 volunteer Regional Elders to assist the regional staff in providing care and counsel to ministers. Together with this team we are able to be present with congregations in moments of celebration, moments of conflict and moments of sorrow. The objective of our regional programming is faith formation, the development of leadership skills and the expansion of understanding of the church's mission. We have formed a partnership with the Mbandaka District of the Disciples Community in the Congo to help our congregations understand their church and their mission in a global framework.

2. As appropriate, please comment on your work in regard to the four mission priorities of New Church, Transformation, Leadership Development and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism and the mission imperative of strengthening congregational life for our mission.

Our long-range goals are to fulfill the Mission Statement that was adopted by our Regional Assembly in 2002. As printed above, the statement calls us to focus our attention on *energizing* and *connecting* congregations in order to fulfill the Great Commission. We believe that our particular mission statement is consistent with the 2020 Vision for the whole church.

Establishing 1000 new congregations

The Christian Church in Indiana currently has nine congregations that are either in formation or in the affiliation process. We anticipate that two of these congregations, New Light Christian Church and Emmaus Christian Church, will be welcomed into full standing this year. Four potential new congregations are in the early stages, one as an affiliation and three as new church plants. Each of these continues to challenge our thinking and understanding of the church as the gospel is proclaimed and God's people are served in new and creative ways.

The great challenge in this area is creating an environment where the ministry of planting new churches becomes a ministry of the entire region: its members, congregations and pastors. New church planting continues to be primarily the concern of staff and the Region's Church Multiplication Team. Even as we work toward creating that culture of evangelism and new church planting, though, we continue to seek out and recruit potential church planters. We continue to study the demographics and growth patterns of the region, looking for the fertile soil where new church plants can take root.

Transforming 1000 existing congregations

More than two years ago, the Indiana region began a transformation process with the coaching of Allelon and Alan Roxburgh. The regional transformation team and Alan worked together in designing a pilot project. We invited congregations into this process and we had seven congregations respond to that invitation. After almost two years, five of those congregations are still engaged with the process. They have found that life in their congregations is being renewed and retooled. One of the important learnings from the process has been how the environment of the congregations has begun to shift. There is more listening to one another, more opportunity for innovation and more people engaged in ministry. The pastors of these congregations have also spent significant time in learning new habits and leadership skills. Although there have been challenges along the way, most would report that they are excited about the process which they have engaged.

This winter, the region has launched a second group of congregations in this missional transformation effort and process. The region continues to work with Allelon with John McLaverty serving as coach to this second group, in addition to regional staff member, Carolyn Reed. The five congregations in this cohort are energized by what they have heard about from those congregations in the pilot project. There seems to be renewed hope in these congregations, even in this very early stage of their process.

One of the important things we, as region, have learned is that it is vital to share the stories of the positive things happening in these transformation congregations in ways that will inspire others. It begins to create new energy across the life of the whole region.

In addition to this concentrated effort in partnering with Allelon, the Indiana region also has several congregations engaged in various other processes that have brought new life to their churches. What the region will need to have in place to fully support these congregational efforts—and extend them, is a region that is also examining its system and life. As a regional board and regional church, we are currently exploring work with Alan Roxburgh and Allelon to see how transformation might happen across the whole system.

Leadership Development

NURTURE & CERTIFICATION

The Indiana Region currently has 63 students in our Nurture and Certification program and anticipate 8 ordinations in 2009 (one already occurred in January). We have 6 people who are moving from other communions into the Disciples and have established a new “transition” team to welcome and work with these students/ministers. We are blessed to have 25 people who volunteer 10 days a year on our Nurture and Certification teams to meet with students and care for them on their journey through seminary and onto ordination.

We also have 62 licensed ministers currently serving or in process of becoming licensed. We are blessed to have 22 people who volunteer 6 days each year to guide, mentor and nurture our licensed ministers.

LEAD

The Indiana Region is completing its 3rd year of the youth leadership development program called LEAD. LEAD is a 6 year program which teaches leadership skills, encourages mission and ministry in young people and helps them to Learn Everything About Disciples. The LEAD I group is learning about congregational life and structure this year as they meet with churches large and small, rural and urban, Anglo, African-American and Hispanic. LEAD I is made up of 11 youth who are now freshman and sophomores in high school. (We still have the same 11 that began 3 years ago!) LEAD II began fall '08 and has 10 7th & 8th graders. They are working on their leadership identity and preparing for General Assembly. LEAD III will begin in the fall of 2010.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Indiana currently has a tiered Healthy Boundaries system. Our HB I deals with clergy sexual misconduct issues, as well as power and authority issues. HB II focuses on a review of sexual boundaries as well as legal and ethical issues/boundaries clergy face. We are currently in the process of developing the 3rd tier which will concentrate on clergy self care.

Becoming anti-racist/pro-reconciling

We do not currently have an Anti-Racism Committee. We do focus the efforts of our new church establishment on the creation of multi-cultural, Hispanic, Asian and African-American communities of faith to affect a broader mix of congregations in our Region. We intentionally work to have commissions and the Board of the Region inclusive of persons of different racial backgrounds. We address this issue with every congregational search committee and encourage consideration of pastors who are of racial identities different than their membership.

The Indiana Region continues to have an active Reconciliation/Community and Global Concerns Commission that offers grants to local congregations. In keeping with new guidelines passed by the 2007 General Assembly in Fort Worth, applications must show how the project addresses racism as well as addressing poverty. The Commission approved 5 grant requests for a total of \$17,420 in 2008. These projects vary from teen centers to English as a second language classes. This commission continues to seek ways to encourage our congregations to engage in the work of Reconciliation in their communities as well as seeking to connect our congregations to community and global issues.

3. In response to interest expressed at the January College of Regional Ministers' meeting, as appropriate, please comment on the following questions.
- What is your region currently doing to work toward the goal of transforming 1000 congregations by the year 2020?
 - Which church transformation resources have you found to be helpful in those efforts?
 - What else do you need to make your church transformation efforts more effective?

As noted above our primary effort has been to invite congregations into an intentional process of coaching with Alan Roxburgh. One dozen congregations have done this. Ten are currently active in the process. The Region itself is considering engaging in a parallel process.

In addition, a number of our congregations are using the *Unbinding the Gospel* series by Martha Grace Reese. We are encouraging other congregations to consider this model by providing study materials at a discount and hosting a region wide evangelism event with Gay Reese on Saturday, May 2, 2009.

4. Particular highlights or challenges of ministry in your region since the last report

Democratic Republic of Congo Partnership

The Region sent a delegation of nine Hoosier Disciples during May to officially begin a partnership between Global Ministries, the Christian Church in Indiana and the Mbandaka District of the Community of the Disciples of Christ in the Congo. The partnership agreement was signed during worship on May 25, 2008 at the Mbandaka III congregation. The Congo Partnership Taskforce meets monthly to look at ways to connect our congregations to this partnership. Some of those ways have been through e-mails and articles in the Indiana Christian, the creation of a "Partners in Mission" DVD to help explain the partnership, the formation of a VBS or Sunday School rotation curriculum called Congo Connection!, and the availability of a Speaker's Bureau made up of the Indiana Delegation. The Taskforce is preparing to welcome Rev. Ilumbe, the District Minister, and his wife Rosette, who is also the chair of Mbandaka's Partnership committee, to Indiana July 2009.

More information on this partnership, including downloads of the partnership video and VBS curriculum is available at www.indianadisciples.org/congopart.php

Camps

Church camp is a vital component of our region's ministry. New camps have infused the program with renewed life. In 2009, there will be three sessions of a Grandparent and Me camp. The increasing popularity of this camp has resulted in the need for this program to grow. In 2008, the first Created to Be Me camp was offered to all 8th graders in the region. We do this in conjunction with CLER Ministries and Linda Goddard. After tremendous reviews from last summer, we will continue to provide this camp on sexuality and Christianity in the foreseeable future. Church camp competes with so many other things for the attention and time of our children and youth, yet our program has remained stable and has seen some growth. We find this to be an indication of the powerful experience that camp can offer in terms of Christian growth and formation.

The Indiana Youth Commission (IYC) gives oversight to regional youth ministries. This group of youth and adults plan two region-wide youth events each year. One of those, the Chi Rho Jam is a two-day event for middle school youth. The other of those events, the CYF Assembly, is a three-day event for high school youth. Both of these events see an average of 200 persons attending. Youth ministry continues to be a vital piece of regional life.

Communications

As staff resources decrease, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain connection with pastors and congregations. Without regular personal contact, these critical relationships can become fragile. The declining ability to be present with pastors and congregations make it imperative to take advantage newer communication technologies in order to effectively send and receive information.

The Region has a long history of publishing a newspaper, The Indiana Christian. The newspaper is delivered to approximately 17,000 households within the region. An additional 500 copies are delivered outside the region. The Indiana Christian does not require subscriptions, nor does it accept paid advertising. In recent years, The Indiana Christian had been published on a bi-monthly basis. However, diminishing funds made it necessary to cut publication to quarterly beginning in 2009.

Although The Indiana Christian is an excellent news resource, the information is often old by the time the paper is delivered. The Region uses mass email for more immediate delivery of news and information. Mass communication by email has been on an as needed basis, often resulting in disjointed messages with little or no coordination. However, beginning in 2009 the Region is developing a bi-weekly electronic newsletter. The e-newsletter attaches to information on the Region's web site and the Region's news blog, hosted at WordPress.

The Region is anticipating a major rework of its web site this year, with the intent of improving both the appearance and navigation of the site. It is also hoped that the web site can become a connectional resource in addition to its informational function.

The Region is also exploring existing social network frameworks as a means of connecting folks from across the Region. The Christian Church in Indiana group on Facebook is at 257 members, as of this writing, and growing. The Region is also exploring ways to take advantage of other network resources, like Twitter.

Other items of interest

The Women's Commission hosted six Spring Events in 2008 by the name of Spring Surprise. At these events the Women of Indiana worshipped, shared a meal, journeyed through New Day Magazine, and learned about the Women-to-Women to Haiti/Dominican Republic together. In October 2008 the Commission offered two retreat opportunities. In different ways, both of the retreats allowed participants the opportunity to explore and reflect on their faith journeys in community. Spring gatherings in 2009 will be under the theme "Tag You're It" inspired by the General Minister and President's Inauguration sermon in Washington.

The Region received a \$50,000 planning grant from the Lilly Endowment Fund for the purpose of designing a process to address clergy indebtedness. Of particular concern is the education debt of newly graduated seminarians that is often \$40,000 to \$50,000 or more. The Lilly Endowment believes that the burden of this debt compromises the ability of the pastor to give effective leadership to the local congregation. The Region developed some pilot groups of clergy to test two different consultative models. In the end a formal request was not submitted to Lilly because of a determination that the Region was not institutionally ready to adopt this project. Nevertheless, we know that the problem is real and have charged the Commission on Ministry to consider ways to address this concern.

The question of the ordination of homosexual persons continues to be an unresolved issue in the life of the Region. A process of discernment was initiated at the 2000 Regional Assembly. Nine years later there appears to be some new openness and interest in renewing that conversation. A Commission on Ministry retreat on this concern was held in the fall of 2008 as well as a series of consultations with clergy on this issue. There remain strong differences of opinion, but the rhetoric appears more open in this day than a decade ago which we read as a hopeful sign.

The 2008 Regional Assembly will be held at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana on October 10 and 11. Rev. Elizabeth Myer-Boulton was guest preacher. There were 400 persons in attendance.

The Heartbeats of Faith campaign to support Churchwide Healthcare is well organized in the Region under the leadership of Rev. Roger Heimer. Hoosier Disciples have contributed at least 20% of the gifts to Heartbeats of Faith received in 2006-2008.

Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region

- A. *What type of accounting method do you use:* ___ Cash ___ X Accrual
- B. *Is a professional audit done annually on your books?* ___ X ___ Yes ___ No.
- C. *For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, please provide the following information:*

	2008	2007	2006
Total Income	\$971,459	956,727	913,382
Total Expenses	<u>\$928,303</u>	<u>897,595</u>	<u>972,839</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	\$43,156*	59,132*	(59,457)*

*Note, net surplus or deficit numbers include all end of the year audit adjustments including depreciation.

- D. *Currently, what is the total amount of Permanent Funds the Region has from which an "Annual Draw" of endowment earnings income is used to support your operations and programming? What is that percentage of draw and how is it calculated?*

Total Endowment Fund balances from which we take a draw to support our Operational Budget---\$680,008.76
[Total of all Designated and Endowment Fund balances as of 12/31/08 is \$1,712,907.]

We currently draw 5% off of the 12 quarter rolling balance. We take no draw from the principal amount, only from growth in the endowment funds.

- E. *What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region's life and vitality?*

Overall decline in giving to Disciples Mission Fund has hampered our ability to faithfully address the mission priorities of the church in congregational redevelopment, leadership development, new church establishment, and clergy/congregational care. We continue to live at the edge of our ability to respond to basic congregational needs with the staff reductions we have had to absorb.

Indiana continues to offer financial support to the whole church disproportionate to our size. Our 185 congregations, representing 5% of the whole church, provided \$1.1 million in funding for Disciples Mission Fund in 2008, which represented 8.3% of all DMF giving. Hoosier Disciples provided \$1.8 million to all Disciples outreach causes last year.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Indiana Region.