

General Board

Business Item # GB-09-0607

Title: Report of the Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ), Inc.

Origin: Paxton Jones, Regional Minister

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

Regional Staff:	Paxton Jones, Regional Minister	M-Cau
	Steve Martin, Associate Regional Minister	M-Cau
	Ken Marston, Associate Regional Minister	M-Cau
	Renee Bridwell, Associate Regional Minister	F-Cau
	Barb Runge, Disciples Women Coordinator (Contract)	F-Cau
	Susan White, Corporate Secretary	F-Cau

Number of Congregations: 95 and 3 in formation

Total Members: 28,588

States Included in Region: Kansas (except Johnson, Miami, and Wyandotte counties)

1. Information regarding how your region has fulfilled the regions’ primary purpose as stated in paragraph 20 of The Design¹.

The mission and vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas as it is being lived out in our region is that of *Raising up Christian leaders for today and tomorrow!*” Our biennial Regional Assembly last October celebrated the manifold ministries taking place in Kansas through our women’s, men’s and youth programs; elders, diaconates, and clergy; and congregations (large and small). The assembly also formalized our new regional structure and officially approved and installed Paxton Jones as our Regional Minister and President.

Innovative programs such as a mission trip for Disciples Men to Greensburg, KS, in March, the first annual “Relax, Refresh, Renew” retreat for clergy in April, and the TEAM² event [Transforming Everyone Around Ministry and Mission] planned for this October offer fresh models for serving, bonding and learning as we leave the comfortable and familiar to explore new paths of Christian leadership. The nurture of congregations occurs through a variety of other avenues as well—including the work of regional church staff in the training and counseling of church leaders; regional youth and adult conferences, camps and retreats; workshops and retreats on spiritual formation and direction; and the implementation of the New Beginnings program in four of our congregations.

¹ The primary purpose of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in regions is twofold: (1) to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region; and (2) to establish, receive, and nurture 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.

Last year the Region committed to becoming a Global Mission Region. Following our Regional Minister's recent immersion trip to the Dominican Republic and Haiti with Felix Ortiz, Bob Shebeck and 11 other regional ministers, we are living our way into a clearer understanding of what that means as we anticipate re-focusing our connection with our Partners in the Caribbean.

Finally, it should be noted that the Kansas Region continues to be a leader in contributions to the Disciples Mission Fund², which increased for the fourth consecutive year in 2008, and to the other special funds that support the work of the whole Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). DMF giving totaled \$624,495.48—an increase of 2.80%, or \$16,988.37, and seventh among all of the regions—while contributions to the Special Day Offerings for Easter (\$35,594.32), Pentecost (\$23,216.74), and Thanksgiving (\$26,603.80) all increased. The offerings for Week of Compassion (\$88,754.68) and Reconciliation (\$24,121.30) dipped slightly. Unfortunately designated gifts for the region and the Christmas Offering (\$36,455.11) took major hits due to the economic downturn. As a result the region experienced an operating fund deficit of \$18,042.66 at year's end—only our second deficit since 1990.³

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 new regional design mandates the naming of “Priorities [to] directly address the purpose of the Christian Church in Kansas as expressed in [its] Constitution.” Therefore last year's Regional Assembly adopted three regional priorities which mirror the focus of our denominational priorities: *1) new church, 2) revitalization, and 3) spirituality.*

Within the past two years, the Kansas Region recognized two new congregations in formation: Iglesia Discipulos de Cristo, a Hispanic congregation in Garden City, pastored by Guillermo Reyes; and Breakthrough Community Church, an African immigrant congregation in Wichita, which is currently seeking new pastoral leadership. We also continue to work with a third congregation in formation, Good Harvest, in Wichita and recently interviewed a clergy couple as potential church planters in Derby, a Wichita suburb. A number of other new church starts are in various stages of development.

The New Beginnings program, mentioned above, holds the promise of transformation for two of the four participating congregations in Kansas. A portion of our most recent regional capital campaign, completed last year, was specifically designated and set aside to help stabilize “viable but struggling congregations.” Those funds currently total \$71,951.74. The regional church staff also works closely with our pastors and congregations in providing consultations and workshops.

² Kansas shares 57.5985% of its DMF income with the whole Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) while retaining only 42.4015% for its own ministries. The Special Day, Week of Compassion and Reconciliation offerings are distributed in accordance with General Board guidelines.

³ It also should be noted that through February 2009 the DMF contributions in Kansas are down \$23,316.42 compared to the same period last year.

In that regard we too often overlook the continuing ministry of the regional church staff when we speak of leadership development. Yet their daily work is to walk with pastors and congregations offering counsel, resources and options; facilitating the search and call process; nurturing licensed and student ministers; and offering training in such areas as boundary issues. The staff also publishes *The Kansas Messenger*, our regional newspaper, which as a vehicle of mass communication is sent six times per year at no charge to every Disciples home in Kansas, lifting up the ministry of the wider church and of the Christian Church in Kansas while celebrating the ministries and milestones of our congregations and pastors. The staff also produces a monthly e-newsletter for each of the region's districts.

Where we as a region have fallen short is in not focusing more on the Pro-reconciliation/Anti-Racism priority. Admittedly our recent New Church efforts have intentionally addressed the need for starting ethnic minority congregations and we are committed to creating more ethnic diversity within our regional leadership positions, but there is so much more we could and should be doing in this regard.

All of the ministries outlined above are part of our efforts to help make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ, raising them up to be Christian leaders for today and tomorrow not only for the region but for the whole mission and witness of the Church.

3. In response to interest expressed at the January College of Regional Ministers' meeting, as appropriate, please comment on the following questions.

- a) *What is your region currently doing to work toward the goal of transforming 1000 congregations by the year 2020?*

The regional church staff in Kansas works closely with its congregations to discern and implement what the business world refers to as "best practices" in terms of governance policies, work load distribution, mission focus, etc. The first step is a frank and honest evaluation of their current practices—an evaluation that is not always well-received yet is essential to transformation.

Our Spiritual Priority team also is working diligently to ensure that a spiritual formation workshop is presented at every district assembly this spring, and is putting together plans to train spiritual directors and retreat leaders in each of the region's five districts.

- b) *Which church transformation resources have you found to be helpful in those efforts?*

The primary resource we are using is the New Beginnings program developed by Church Extension. It first was introduced to our congregations at last year's Regional Assembly, and will be promoted regionally again during our TEAM² event next October.

Additional resources being utilized by some of our regional church staff include *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* by Charles M. Olsen, *The Church Growth Handbook* by William Easum, *Recreating the Church:*

Leadership for the Postmodern Age by Richard L. Hamm, and *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* by Diana Butler Bass.

c) *What else do you need to make your church transformation efforts more effective?*

Our primary needs at the moment are for more congregations to understand their need for transformation into a church for this century and for more funding. We would welcome any suggestions regarding how to meet both needs!

4. *Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region*

A. *What type of accounting method do you use?* Cash

B. *Is a professional audit done annually on your books?* Yes.

C. *For the past three years with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, please provide the following information:*

	2008	2007	2006
Total Income	\$1,342,364.33	\$1,356,312.06	\$1,342,953.00
Total Expense	<u>1,360,406.99</u>	<u>1,351,312.06</u>	<u>1,342,864.59</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$18,042.66)	\$5,000.00 ⁴	\$88.41

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

The Kansas Region holds various trusts, endowments, quasi-endowments, term-endowments, restricted funds, etc., that's total value was \$3,819,276.69 at the end of 2008 (down \$1,195,387.25 [-23.84%] from the previous year-end total of \$5,014,663.94). A draw is budgeted for operations from the earnings of unrestricted reserves. In 2008 that budgeted amount was \$7,775.00. Earnings from a trust fund with an oil lease provided the 2008 operating budget with another \$71,554.88.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Kansas Region.

⁴ The actual yearend balance in 2007 was \$26,123.32, but the bulk of the remainder was transferred into reserve fund accounts before the books were closed.