

**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America
Annual Report to the General Board meeting April 18, 2009**

Filed by Danny L. Stewart, Ph.D., Regional Minister and President

General Information:

Regional Staff: (Listing by name, with gender, whether ethnic minority)
Danny L. Stewart, Regional Minister and President (M, Anglo)
Martha Baurichter, Administrative Assistant, (F, Anglo)
Dorothy Hudson, Part-Time Administrative Assistant, (F, Anglo)
Rebecca Bias, Financial Administrator (F, Anglo)
Madeline Harraway, Contract staff, Communications (F, African Am)
Conni Ess, Contract Staff, Women's Coordinator (F, Anglo)
David Machon, Contract Staff, CRY Coordinator (M, Anglo)
Faye Vaughan, Contract staff, Convocation Coordinator (F, African Am)
Kris Tenney-Brittian, North East Area Minister (F, Anglo)
Bill and Donna Rose-Heim, North West Area Ministers (M & F, Anglo)
Mike Weinman, Ozarks Lakes Area Minister, (M, Anglo)
Penny Ross-Corona, South East Gateway Area Minister (F, Anglo)

Number of Congregations: 277

Total Members: 55,823

States included in Region: Missouri (except Kansas City) and counties in Illinois surrounding St. Louis

1. Mission and Nurture:

The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) describes the nature, purpose and function of regions in paragraphs 19, 20, 23, 24 and 25. These paragraphs name mission, nurture and oneness as the three primary functions to realize the purpose of regions. At the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church of Mid-America held in St. Charles, MO, October 11, 2006, we affirmed these three elements in the formal adoption of a revised statement of our Vision/Mission/Identity. That three sentence statement is the guiding document for our work. That statement is:

In all its expressions, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America is one body within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and one body within the universal church of Jesus Christ.

Mutually we exist to connect, nurture, challenge, affirm and serve those seeking to:

Live into the Great Confession (Grow in Christ): Matt. 16:13-19; Eph 4: 13-16

Live up to the Great/New Commandments: Matt. 22:35-40; John 13:34-35

Live out the Great Commission: (Matt. 28:18-20)

In doing so, we demonstrate deep Christian spirituality, true community and a passion for justice.

The Mid-America Region accomplishes its mission through a Regional Missional Center and four Area Mission Centers. The Regional Mission Center is located in Jefferson City, in Central Missouri. From this center, coordination of Region wide functions occurs. Area Mission Centers are located in the North East at Columbia; in the North West at Cameron; in Ozarks Lakes at Springfield; and in South East Gateway at St. Louis. Functions of mission, nurture and wholeness are focused through these five mission centers.

From the Regional Mission Center mission, nurture and oneness are focused through ministries organized as Commissions, Constituencies and Partners. Each ministry brings together congregations and individuals with calling and passion for specific ministry tasks. These organizations work in close concert with Area Mission Centers to accomplish the wide variety of mission and nurture ministries that together reach toward our mutual purpose.

The Commission on Ministry provides guidance, nurture, oversight and accountability for clergy in the region. Ordination and ministerial standing is overseen by the Commission on the Ministry. Licensing on behalf of the region is recommended by Area Committees on the Ministry.

The Commission on Mission and Unity provides oversight and involvement in mission beyond regional boundaries, the mission of pro-reconciliation and anti-racism throughout the region, movements of ecumenicity and cooperation in social and economic ministries.

The Commission on Leader Development focuses on the calling and nurture of individuals for roles in the church such as Youth development, teacher development, Elder and Deacon development.

The Commission on Vital Church oversees ministries of New Church development and transformation.

The Rickman Commission oversees the ministries of the Rickman Conference Center located in Jefferson City on the 200 acre campus of the Regional Mission Center. This facility provides space for retreats, camps, conferences and educational events.

Constituencies for Women, Men, Youth and Clergy oversee ministries directly related to their constituents and focus attention on mission, nurture and oneness.

Partnerships with other denominations and organizations provide a multiplication of mission activity and witness. Partnerships include MO IMPACT (a social action agency), Missouri Christian Leadership Forum, Woodhaven Ministries, other former NBA facilities, College of Regional Ministers, Heartland Regional Cluster, and educational ministries. Among the educational ministries are Missouri School of Religion (which is located in the Regional Mission Center), four Disciples-related institutions of higher education in the Region—Columbia College, Culver-Stockton, Drury, and William

Woods College—and seminaries through Phillips Theological Seminary and the Friends of Eden Seminary.

The Regional Mission Center provides the infrastructure, technology and oversight for ministries of search and call and congregational help and support. Areas utilize these resources to provide closer-by ministries and to coordinate services with and through congregations in smaller geographic arenas.

Areas are critical to the accomplishment of our purpose, function and wholeness as a regional ministry. These structures formed from District ministries that began on the frontier as soon as the second church in the region was founded! The nine original districts consolidated to four continuing areas today. Since their founding, districts/areas have been ministries from the grass roots upward, with congregations providing funding to call and support a District/Area Minister. Additionally, congregations support Disciples Mission Fund and special day offerings and this has been the case since before United Promotion and Basic Mission Finance.

2. Mid-America Regional Work in regard to the four mission priorities of New Church, Transformation, Leadership Development and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism.

The Regional Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Team sponsored a Regional Training event in June, 2008. Thirty participants enthusiastically embraced the event. From that event additional members have been added to PR/AR teams in the North East Area and in the South East Gateway Area. Another event is in the planning stage for the coming year.

Transformation ministries have been expanding. Under the sponsorship of the Vital Church Commission, twenty-six participants attended the Transformation summit in Arlington, Texas in January, 2006. From that event Area teams for transformation have evolved in each Area. Initial efforts have included two clusters of congregations engaged in the Columbia Partnership series with George Bullard in the South East Gateway Area; a cluster of congregations in the Ozark Lakes Area working with the same group; more than twenty committed congregations partnering in transformation in the North West Area as the Area engages in the Missional Church initiative and has Richard Hamm as a coach for the Area; a new coaching model for transformation in the North East Area under the leadership of new Area Minister Kris Tenney-Brittian; initial gatherings of a cluster of congregations in the South East Gateway Area with the New Beginnings initiative with Church Extension. The North West Area hosted the transforming church event (GPS) for the Heartland regions in March, 2009.

New Church efforts are springing to life in the region. Two new church starts have been funded. The Liberation Church in the University City area of St. Louis is enjoying a strong beginning. Other new church starts are on the drawing boards. The Ozark Lakes Area is committed to a new church in a rapidly growing part of Springfield.

At the October 11, 2006 Regional Assembly, the region formally committed to becoming a *Global Mission Region*. As part of this commitment, the Region arranged for James Wilson, Global Mission personnel from Botswana, to serve as Interim Regional Minister

January –March, 2009 while Dr. Danny Stewart took a sabbatical. The Regional Minister spent three weeks in February and March in a mission immersion trip to our partners in Mexico. The region now has 12 Mission and Ministry Interpreters and is looking to double that number this year.

Leader Development: The Commission on the Ministry continues to receive new applicants for ordained ministry. Although there is still a great need for new clergy, the commission celebrates that there is a continued influx of new candidates. Many of these candidates are younger than in previous years. Several inquiries into partner standing and into recognition of standing have been received. The Commission has implemented requirements for continuing education and boundary training for annual certification of standing. With the UCCIB as partner, Donna Rose Heim has attended training to lead future boundary training events in conjunction with Missouri School of Religion.

The Region continues to provide scholarship assistance for students from the region attending seminaries.

3. Response to College of Regional Minister query:

- a. The region has four areas that are actively attempting to involve congregations in the effort to engage congregations in the continuing process of transformation. Since transformation is a process rather than an act to be completed, the Areas are working closely with each other in developing a variety of efforts with congregations. More than 40 congregations have engaged in direct programs for opening to God's leadership for the future. Consultants have come from Missional church initiative, Columbia Partnership, Bandy/Easum, New Beginnings and Natural Church Development. Since there is no statistical measure that determines when a church is "transformed", "meeting" this objective is difficult to assess.
- b. All the above resources have been helpful in varying degrees. As congregations enter upon the journey, the most effective resource is the Area Minister who continues to provide assurance and accompaniment for the congregation, pastors and leaders. No one resource works for all congregations. This is pastoral work at the judicatory level and requires enormous financial resources as well as people and personal energy resources. The Heartland cluster of regions gathered full time staff members for mutual networking and support in March.
- c. What else do we need to make these efforts more effective: Financial resources to continue accompanying congregations on the journey and to help bring other congregations into the journey.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Mid-America Region.