

**Report of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montana  
By Ruth Fletcher, Regional Minister**

**Regional Staff**

Regional Minister: Ruth Fletcher, female Caucasian  
Part-time Administrative Assistant: Kathy McKerrow, female Caucasian  
Part-time Caretaker, Cane Ridge West: Judy Johnson, female Caucasian  
Disciples Women Staff (volunteer): Jean Muir, female Caucasian  
Open Circles Pastor: John Payne, male Caucasian

**Established Congregations: 13  
Total Members: 2001**

**Congregations in Formation: 3  
States Included: Montana**

**OUR MISSION: To strengthen congregations to effectively share Christ's Ministry with the world**

**Extending the Ministry of Christ in Mission**

In addition to outreach giving by congregation, the Region gave \$623 to the Foods Resource Bank through our "virtual cow" project, our campers gave \$578 to plant new trees through the National Council of Churches New Community Project, we gave \$600 to the support of the Ecumenical Lay Ministry Institute of Montana and \$1500 to support the Montana Association of Churches.

**Extending the Ministry of Christ in Teaching**

Through our camps, Festival of Faith, ministers' continuing education event, retreats for the eldership, boundaries training and retreats for Disciples Men and Disciples Women and our Regional Assembly, we nurtured faith and trained leaders to serve Christ's mission.

**Extending the Ministry of Christ in witness and service**

A team of sixteen people from Montana traveled to New Orleans to rebuild houses for a week. We are doing an "environmental audit" on our campground in order to make it more ecological. Our anti-racism team led "Show Me the Elephant" workshops for DOC and UCC congregations in Montana.

**Establishing Congregations**

In 2008, the Regional Church financially supported New Day Fellowship, a regionally initiated new church start in northwest Missoula. Seeker's Harbor, a self-supporting individually initiated new church, continues to grow, to establish new small groups and to support social justice in the community of Billings. We have called a half-time minister to help us establish small groups called "Open Circles" in isolated Montana communities where no Disciples congregation exists. Open Circles participants have come together for two retreats and the teams of leaders for those small groups have gathered once for leader training and orientation.

**Strengthening and Transforming Congregations**

Believing that leadership is key to church transformation efforts, we have emphasized the practice of spiritual disciplines and taught both pastors and lay leaders about congregational systems, adaptive change, cultural shifts and the importance of being mission focused. Several of our congregations are using the Real Life Evangelism Series. The "Living the Questions" video series has proved helpful in speaking to those who seeking a more progressive understanding of faith. In Open Circles retreats, we are relying on the "Courage to Lead" materials developed by Parker Palmer. Our Regional Leadership continues to be frustrated that there is not a more coordinated church-wide effort to develop models and to share stories of congregations who are transforming in a variety of ways.

**UCC Partnership**

We held our ministers' retreat and Assembly jointly with the UCC Montana Northern Wyoming Conference in 2008 and 2009. We have established a task force to explore how we might work more closely together in the future.

**Recommended Action:**

The General Board receives the report from the Montana Region.