

## General Board

Business Item # GB-09-0613

Title: Report of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska

Origin: Kenneth W. Moore, Regional Minister

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

**Regional Staff:** (Listing by name, with gender, whether ethnic minority)

- Regional Minister: Kenneth W. Moore, male
- Regional Minister for Leader Development, and Program Administrator for Cotner College Educational Ministries: Sharon Shields, female, part-time
- Outdoor Ministries and Youth Director (with UCC): Lesa Gengenbach, female, part-time
- Kamp Kaleo Administrator (with UCC): Gaylene O'Brien, female, part-time
- Disciples Women's Ministries: Lois LaFon, female, part-time
- Disciples Men Coordinator and Business Manager: Paul Few, male, volunteer
- Bookkeeper: Genevieve Randall, female, part-time
- Administrative Assistant for CCN and Cotner College Educational Ministries: Janeen Bruner, female
- Communications Coordinator: Donna Lutes Chapin, female, part-time
- Project Director of Transforming Covenants (with UCC): Peter Frazier-Koontz, male, half-time
- Covenantal Group Coordinator (with UCC): Russell Seger, male, part-time

**Number of Congregations:** 50

**Total Members:** 8230

**States included in Region:** Nebraska

### **MISSION**

The Christian Church in Nebraska voted in 2008 to be a Global Mission Region. As a part of this commitment we have begun a weekly prayer list inviting Nebraska Disciples to remember members of our mission personnel each week in prayer.

In January there were twelve persons from Nebraska who spent two weeks in Ghana on a study trip. Rather than working on building projects as in past trips, the purpose of this journey was for dialogue with pastors and seminary teachers with our Global Mission partners in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. As a part of our Ghana partnership we have built a seminary library, clinic, and retreat center in Ghana. We have supplied our partners with a well, library books, scholarships, medical supplies, musical instruments, and recreational equipment through our mission projects.

Last year, the Regional Minister and his wife were part of a delegation that visited churches and seminaries in China. Since their return, the Moore's have been doing presentations all around Nebraska on "The Church in China Today."

There were twenty high school students this year who traveled to New York City and Washington D.C. in March as a part of the 25<sup>th</sup> annual "International Affairs Seminar." The theme was on the church in China.

The theme of the 2008 Regional Assembly held at Bethany Christian Church in Lincoln was "God in Your Grace Transform the World." The keynote speaker was Dr. Sharon Watkins. The Region's Congregational Transformation Team shared stories from large, small and medium sized congregations experiencing new vitality and introduced the region-wide Spiritual Strategic Journey transformation strategy.

A part of the Region's camping program is devoted to offering hope and help to children and adults with special needs. Each year there are two "Adventures in Community" camps for the developmentally challenged, a camp for burn victims and a Lions camp for children who are blind. Summer of 2009, in partnership with Easter Seals, we will offer a camp for autistic children.

Though GAIN (Grants to American Indians in Nebraska) we join with other denominations and Mutual of Omaha to assist agencies across our state that provide services to Native Americans. Dr. Ken Moore and other GAIN committee members recently visited programs we support and experienced first hand the help and hope we bring to those who live in oppressive poverty, which is the daily experience of most of our Native American brothers and sisters.

For over one hundred years Nebraska Disciples have been a part of the mission of Child Saving Institute headquartered in Omaha, NE, to “respond to the cry of the child.” Last year over 3,000 children and families were served. CSI recently was selected as a demonstration site for the Center of Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. CSI has developed effective strategies that have resulted in children’s improved academic success through the early intervention to address these children’s social and behavior needs that affected their school performance.

Also, CSI has been re-accredited with the Council on Accreditation. As an accredited provider of services to children, donors and parents can rest assured that CSI follows best practices in its services to children and their families.

Campers at Kamp Kaleo last summer raised \$3500 to assist the Heartland Refugee Resettlement, a Church World Service affiliate, in Lincoln. The funds raised were used to assist immigrant families that have been sponsored by our Lincoln churches.

#### ***TEACHING AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT***

There are now four denominations participating in our Education for Lay Ministry (Disciples, UCC, Presbyterian, and American Baptists). Thirty-eight persons attended the March 2009 Student/Mentor retreat in this three year program for persons interested in lay ministry. At the request of our ELM graduates, we now offer four continuing education courses each year under the heading of “Cotner Communities of Learning.” Rev. Tim Adams provides staff coordination for these events.

Rev. Carla Fletcher, Pastor and Attorney at Law, was this year’s keynote speaker for the Elders’ Retreat. She was joined by Kirby Gould, Vice President of the Christian Church Foundation, and George Thietje of the UCC Insurance Board, in leading a discussion on the congregational oversight responsibilities of Elders.

Dr. John Imbler was the keynote speaker for the Men’s Retreat at Kamp Kaleo. The theme was “Pursuing Disciples’ Identity.

This year we are sponsoring two Ethics in Ministry Retreats for pastors. We also offer two seminars each year on interim ministry.

Nebraska was well represented at Sessions 2008. The Disciple Women held Cluster events in each part of our state.

There were 105 ministers at this year’s Clergy Convocation. The keynote speaker was N. Graham Standish who spoke to the theme “Becoming a Blessed Leader.” He is the author of *Becoming a Blessed Leader* and *Humble Leadership* published by the Alban Institute.

#### ***WITNESS AND SERVICE***

Dr. Michael Kinnaman, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, was our guest speaker for the state-wide observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity hosted by the First Christian Church in Lincoln.

Disciples are one of the four denominations that support Nebraska United Ministries in Higher Education. We have campus ministries on six Nebraska campuses. Two of the campus ministers are Disciples.

There were over 100 Hispanic families who attended the Thanksgiving Dinner held at our new Hispanic congregation in Omaha. There were 115 adults and 109 children who attended the Christmas program that reached out to the families of workers at a nearby meat packing plant. Unfortunately, Carlos Molina resigned as pastor of this growing congregation and nearly all of the members who had joined the church under his leadership left with

him. We are working with an ecumenical partnership called Latins United to restart this congregation and to provide outreach ministries among the Hispanic community in Omaha. We are planning a “Miracle Day” for this summer to get classrooms ready for an after school program to serve Hispanic youth who attend South High which is located next door to the church.

Nebraska Disciples are helping launch *Interfaith Power and Light of Nebraska*. Dr. Ken Moore is the organization’s first president. The purpose of IPL is to mobilize a religious response to the challenge of global warming. We are working to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation, and we are providing people of faith with an opportunity to put their faith into action and help reduce the devastating effects of global warming. Recently Dr. Moore was the speaker at an event for the Nebraska legislature introducing them to the efficiencies of Nebraska’s first “net zero carbon emissions home.”

Over 6,000 Nebraska families were served by our ecumenical Rural Response Hotline. A growing number of these calls for assistance came from returning soldiers and their families.

### ***ANTI-RACISM***

The Rev. April G. Johnson, Minister of Reconciliation, and Martha Herrin led an event called “Overcoming Racism” for Nebraska Disciples and our partners in the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ.

### ***ESTABLISH NEW CONGREGATIONS***

CrossBridge Christian Church had 575 persons attend their CrossFest event last fall. Since that event there have been an additional 75 persons in worship each week. There were 21 additions in January, 12 by baptism. The average worship is over 300. Dr. Jim Gordon has announced his retirement from this ministry. He will be joining the regional staff as Minister of Church Multiplication this summer.

SouthPointe Christian Church continues to thrive and grow under the leadership of Dr. Craig Walls. Two licensed ministers were recently added to the church staff. Judy Fitzgerald coordinates the congregation’s care ministries, and Hollie Schiable is the director of children’s ministries.

### ***CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION***

After a three-year study, the Congregational Transformation Team decided to work with George Bullard in developing our region-wide transformation strategy. Dr. Bullard and Ken Kessler spent a week training 13 persons to serve as coaches with congregations on a Spiritual Strategic Journey. There were sixty persons who attended the introductory seminary. Four congregations are officially enrolled in this process and are getting ready to launch their congregation’s 100 Days of Prayer and Discernment. We plan to work with a new cluster of congregations each year.

*What else do you need?* We appreciate opportunities to learn what works best with congregations in other regions.

### ***NURTURE CONGREGATIONS FOR MISSION AND MINISTRY***

Each year we offer evangelism events in locations across Nebraska. The speaker for the series last fall was the Rev. R. Wayne Calhoun from Disciples Home Missions. 115 persons attended three seminars under the theme “Wake Up to a New Day in the Church.”

Nearly all of our ministers are involved in one of eleven Covenant Learning Groups for pastors across the state. Since we began the “Transforming Covenants” Pastoral Excellence Project five years ago we have found that our pastors are more energized and passionate about their ministry. We were successful in our application for a second grant from the Lilly Endowment. The new grant will support the ministry of Covenant Learning Groups, provide scholarship support for minister’s learning projects, and Cotner College educational programs for pastoral leaders.

Congregations from across Nebraska participated in the “Water for Sudan” project to raise \$6,000 to drill a bore well in this country where so many lack access to clean water.

Each year we sponsor a Men’s and a Women’s Spiritual Retreat. The Men’s Winter Rally in February provided an opportunity for men’s groups to share many of the different ways that their congregations are engaged in mission.

