

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION
GENERAL BOARD REPORT
APRIL 18-21 2009**

1. HOW HAS THE PSWR FULFILLED THE REGION'S PRIMARY PURPOSE AS STATED IN PARAGRAPH 20 OF *THE DESIGN*.

MISSION: Within our Region we have two significant mission sites, All Peoples Christian Center located in South Central Los Angeles and Eastmont Community Center located in East Los Angeles. The mission of All Peoples Christian Center is to provide a broad spectrum of social services to all, regardless of faith or race, and to empower the community to meet its needs by promoting equality, unity, respect and self-determination among all who participate in its programs. Hands-on mission experiences are conducted by groups within the Region and outside the Region at All Peoples. Eastmont Community Center in collaboration with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is designed to enhance the quality of life for children, youth, working adults and seniors in low-income families by providing needed education, social services, and health and wellness services that promote personal development and self-sufficiency. Recently we have connected our Hispanic congregations to this important mission program as well as restructured their board for greater partnership and effective service. Another unit of our Region is Project IMPACT. In order to meet the ever increasing needs of the community, Project IMPACT offers a comprehensive Juvenile Diversion program providing "at-risk" youth positive alternatives to drugs, gangs and other elements that destroy young lives. Project IMPACT is partnering with many of our congregations as a part of a comprehensive plan for transformation and mission-directed ministry through free tutoring services for "at risk" youth in local schools. We have also established a Global Mission Committee to broaden our connections as Region and local congregations with the wide mission work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Recent trips to Africa, Palestine, and Nicaragua, by Regional staff, pastors or lay people have further strengthened this effort.

ANTI-RACISM: Our Regions Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Committee recently sponsored a region-wide two day Anti-Racism training event. Our trainers were Christ Hobgood and Sandhya Jha who led us through a comprehensive introduction and analysis of racism. We intentionally increased the number of constituency representatives on our Regional Board (currently 1/3 are people of color).

NEW CHURCH: Two new congregations have been brought under care in the Pacific Southwest Region since 2008 (we now have 46 congregations under care). Our newest additions are: Iglesia Cristiana Emanuel, Rialto, CA and Saegil Christian Church, Pasadena, CA

TRANSFORMATION: In May of 2008 we had 18 congregations participate in the New Beginnings program conducted by Church Extension: Westchester CC, LA; All Peoples CC, LA; United CC, LA, McCarty Memorial CC, LA; Downey Memorial CC, Downey; Orangethorpe CC, Fullerton; Vista La Mesa, La Mesa; Pasadena CC, Pasadena; DelHaen CC, La Ovente, FCC Pomona; FCC Ontario; FCC San Bernadino; FCC Rialto; FCC Riverside; Church of the Chimes, Fontana; Foothill CC, La Cresenta; Wahiwawa, HI; FCC Honolulu. Each congregation completed the assessment, held cottage meetings, and made a "bold decision" for the future. Though for many this was a painful process it was also a very positive one. Congregations felt re-energized about future possibilities for ministry. In February of 2009, we again gathered all our New Beginnings congregations together to meet with CE staff for an update and evaluation of the process and to begin the conversation of "next steps" in the Transformation journey. We are making plans for June of 2009 to kick-off a region-wide participation in "Unbinding the Gospel" study as a part of our transformation work. Also in September of 2008, we hosted the first of 5 GPS events sponsored by DHM. We had about 25 congregations participate. It was a well executed event and everyone went away inspired and encouraged. We are also working with individual congregations outside the New Beginnings participants on a variety of transformational processes.

2. HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES OF MINSITRY IN THE PSWR

HIGHLIGHTS: In March of 2008, we held our annual Regional Clergy gathering and had over 100 in attendance! This was nearly 3 times as many as previous years. We also had a significant increase in participation from our ethnic constituency pastors. In May of 2008 we had 18 congregations participate in the New Beginnings program conducted by Church Extension, this had a very positive impact on our Region. In July of 2008 we hosted the ICYF and coordinated over 400 young people working on mission experiences around the Region. In September of 2008 we hosted the first of 5 GPS events sponsored by DHM. We had over 25 congregations participate. In October 2008 we held our Bi-Annual Regional Assembly with the theme: “One Church, New Church, Transformed”. We had General staff from our constituencies as key speakers: Geunhee Yu, Huberto Pimentel, and Timothy James. We also had participating at our Assembly: Jim Powell, President of Church Extension, Don Shelton, Interim President of DHM and Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. We held our first annual Pastors Summit with our visiting General church staff with over 100 pastors attending! In January of 2009 we created a Transformation Conversation planning team to develop a Region-wide conversation on Homosexuality and other critical issues facing the church. In February 2009, we sponsored a Regional Anti-Racism Training event with over 40 pastors and lay people attending.

CHALLENGES: Along with the blessing of new congregations coming under care is also the added responsibility for supporting, nurturing, and embracing these newly forming and affiliating congregations into the life of the Region and Disciples of Christ family. We are also facing the added challenge of declining membership in our smaller congregations and finding pastoral leadership for these churches who can no longer afford full-time pastoral support. We are continually struggling with finding means to bring health and vitality to our established churches. We also face the continued challenge to bring our constituency congregations into relationships with one another for the strength of the whole Region. We face the challenge of broadening the number of trained clergy and lay people for transformation of our churches. In addition to the challenges already noted there have been the usual time devoted to the search and call process, dealing with places of conflict, and ministerial misconduct as well as addressing the financial changes due to our economic down turn.

3. GOALS OF THE PSWR WITH REGARD TO THE PRIORITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: In January 2008 we held our first Regional Board Retreat with three goals: To develop stronger relationships through fellowship, deepen our experiences through shared faith practices, and enliven our future through shared plans, dreams and visions. We are in the process of developing a new ministry with young adult women for leadership development and training. We have a goal to continue to increase leaders on all our boards and committees from our constituency groups. Also, to meet the growing needs of our Region we have restructured our Committee on Ministry Committee into four key areas and restructured of our New Church Development Committee to better receive, guide, grow and establish our newly forming and affiliating congregations. We are also creating a Development Committee which will include grant writers, fund raisers, and leaders in development and stewardship for long range fiscal viability. We have recently established a Leadership Development team to help us grow in this vital area.

ANTI-RACISM: We are working with our Committee on Ministry to require ordination candidates to take some Anti-Racism training prior to the completion of their ordination process. We are making plans to hold another Anti-Racism training event in our Region. We are broadening the representatives on our committee to further reflect the make-up our diverse Region. We have also been intentionally increasing the number of constituency representatives on our Regional Board (currently 1/3 are people of color).

TRANSFORMATION: We are making plans to host a Region-wide study (perhaps with the UCC) on “Unbinding the Gospel” as part of the next steps for our Transformation work. We are making plans to work with and participate with the UCC in their annual “transformation” event this year. We are also developing ways to network our transformation congregations with resources, information, story sharing and more.

We have found the New Beginnings program a very helpful process for moving congregations forward that have long been stalled or declining to making a decision for the future. Most of our congregations that have gone through this process are now looking for support in what might be some next steps for congregations in the fourth quadrant to take to turn them around for positive growth.

NEW CHURCH: We have been working with Charlie Wallace from New Church Ministry in exploring new church start possibilities in the Las Vegas area. We have had several conversations and meetings with members of FCC Las Vegas who are potential supporters of this project. We have toured possible sites for the project and met with David Emery and Michael Spitters as consultants. We had a meeting with members of our MissionGathering congregation in San Diego and our General Staff from Church Extension to talk about ways and models for developing new churches in the Emergent church style as well as creating Viral Communities online with Facebook and other Internet media venues. We are also planning to meet with 6-7 of our largest congregations to propose helping us launch new congregations. We have Nadine Burton from New Church Ministry meeting with our African American convocation churches and pastors to begin the conversations for developing and starting new African American congregations.

MISSION: With the establishment of a Global Missions Committee we are taking steps to become a Global Mission Region. We are developing a program for high school and college young people to participate in a 3year cycle of mission experiences – year 1, local, year 2 national, and year 3 global. We also have plans to host Cathy Nichols, visiting missionary from Palestine. We are planning two MMI (Ministries and Mission Interpreters) Training events this year. We are setting a goal to take at least one overseas mission trip with pastors and lay people from our Region.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Pacific Southwest Region.