

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN PENNSYLVANIA
2009 ANNUAL REPORT**

To: The General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
From: William B. Allen

TRANSITIONS

In August 2008 the Reverend Dr. W. Darwin Collins concluded fourteen years of service as Regional Minister of Pennsylvania. Dr. Collins is widely recognized as a creative and energetic leader in our church and he is much beloved by Pennsylvania Disciples. His resignation as Regional Minister was greeted with sorrow and dismay throughout the regional church. However, we look forward to his continuing leadership for our Region and the whole church in his ministry as Vice President of the Great Lakes Zone for the Christian Church Foundation. Darwin's remarkable ministry was celebrated at an evening of fellowship and gift-giving on October 25, 2008.

Between August 31, 2008, when Darwin concluded his Regional Ministry, and October 1, 2008, when I began my service for the interim, the Reverend John D. Crist served as acting Regional Minister. As he has done so frequently over the years, John offered the Region and the whole church wise and effective leadership and we are most grateful to him for his willingness to bridge that time span.

The service of leaders like Darwin Collins and John Crist is exemplary of the leadership that has characterized the Pennsylvania Region throughout its 175 years of ministry and across its congregations. It is an honor to be part of this legacy.

In the half year which I have been privileged to serve the Pennsylvania region as Regional Minister and President, I have received an enthusiastic and affectionate welcome wherever I have visited and I have been deeply impressed by the faithfulness of Pennsylvania Disciples and their love for the church.

We are involved in a fruitful ministry on behalf of our God and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and I offer this report as a testament to this faithful service.

THE PURPOSE OF REGIONS IN *THE DESIGN*

The Pennsylvania Region has been ambitious in striving to be responsive to the purposes of regions (as outlined in *The Design*) to be a faithful church in our time and our part of the world. At the July 2008 Regional Assembly, two new congregations were received into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): Templo Genesis of Philadelphia and Iglesia Cristiana Tabernaculo de Oracion of Pittsburgh.

The Commission on Ministry faithfully undertakes its responsibilities to prepare and support a wise, caring and effective Order of Ministry for the Region and on behalf of the whole church.

Extensive reorganization of the youth camping program is underway, including the closing of one of the Region's two campgrounds (with all of the sadness and confusion that accompanies such a move). And yet a caring and competent youth leadership is laying the groundwork for an excellent season of camps and retreats.

FOUR MISSION PRIORITIES

New Church: There are several congregations-in-formation in the Region. We are seeking creative ways to assist in the training of the pastors and lay leaders for these congregations as they come from their varying cultures and journeys in the faith.

Transformation: While our congregations are each seeking in their own ways to be responsive to God's call in each new situation, the Region itself is embarked on a transformative process as it seeks to continue its faithful journey of service to its pastors, members, congregations, the whole church and the cosmos in which God calls us to live and minister. A transformation team is in place and beginning its task of assessing the Region's preparedness to do mission in the 21st century.

Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism: The Region has had a Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism team in existence for some years, but it is time for us to revisit this emphasis and retool. We do require that ministers be trained in this area and it is time for us to offer training opportunities for our clergy.

Strengthening congregational life: Over the years the Region has been involved in programs of congregational revitalization and continues to strive to make available staff and resources when opportunities present themselves.

REASSESSMENT

The Region finds itself in a time of regrouping in terms of redefining staff responsibilities, organizational structures, office and campground usage, and we are virtually reassessing our entire ministry. Fiscal as well as missional demands are calling us to a time of careful evaluation of our work. We perceive this time to be initiated and blessed by God; perhaps a time of turning aside to 'behold the burning bush'. While attending to internal/maintenance issues, we continue to be involved in the traditional ministries of a region, and we are doing these to the extent of our abilities. But we know we are heading in new directions and uncharted seas (pardon the metaphor shift).

We are in good company with much of Christ's church as we pursue this journey, but we are definitely, intentionally on the journey, so pray for us as we pray for the whole church.

GRATITUDE

I cannot say enough for all those who have been a remarkable blessing as I have taken up this mantle. Our diligent, accomplished, faithful and over-worked staff; our Moderators and Executive Committee, who have been as hard-working as any group I have ever served with in the church; my clergy colleagues who have surrounded me with prayers and jovial camaraderie; the committed members of the regional church who are a constant source of support and love; my marvelous family; all these (whom I would not begin to name) and many more have provided me with just what I need as I undertake this journey with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Pennsylvania Region.

