

GENERAL BOARD

BUSINESS ITEM # GB-09-0624

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

Origin: Glen J. Stewart, Regional Minister

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

Regional Staff: Glen J. Stewart (M/C), Regional Minister and President
Virginia Brooks (F/C), Secretary
Joan Hale(F/C) Bookkeeper
David Johnson (M/C), Bethany Hills Manager
Sekinah Hamlin (F/B), Minister of Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation
Hope Hodnett (F/C), Contract Staff for Camp and Conference
Frits Haverkamp (M/C), Contract Staff for Congregational Transformation

Number of Congregations :59

Total Members:25,933 (17,585 participating)

States included in Region: Tennessee and DeSoto County, Mississippi

1. How the Tennessee Region has fulfilled the regions' primary purpose as stated in paragraph 20 of *The Design*.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee is very focused on the purpose of regions as outlined in paragraph 20 of *The Design*. Glen Stewart, Regional Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee, serves the Disciples' congregations, their members and pastors in many ways to support and uplift the congregations in the Region. Our Regional Minister gives much time to congregations as they deal with conflict, as they seek new pastors, and as they seek to serve their communities. Further, he takes his call as pastor to congregations, members, and pastors very seriously calling on pastors around the State of Tennessee as he travels. One of the emphases of the ministry of the Christian Church in Tennessee is establishing new congregations. Always working in partnership with the New Church Team, Rick Morse, the outstanding leader of the New Church Team, the Christian Church in Tennessee has recently started a number of new congregations. The newest congregation to start is Iglesia Cristiana Nueva Vida, Memphis. The Christian Church in Tennessee is seeking to serve a growing Mexican population in Memphis and Tennessee. The ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee extends to young and old, men and women, lay and clergy, English speaking and Spanish speaking, in congregations large and small.

2. As appropriate, please comment on your work in regard to the four mission priorities of New Church, Transformation, Leadership Development, and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism and the mission imperative of strengthening congregational life for our mission.

The Christian Church in Tennessee works hard to achieve the four mission priorities and the mission imperative of strengthening congregational life for our mission. The Christian Church in Tennessee has had some success in the areas of New Church, Transformation, and Leadership Development. The New Congregation Establishment Commission of the Region has been active starting congregations within the Region and taking in congregations when congregations request it. A Commission of the Region and a part-time contract staff person work to help transform congregations in the Region. While there has been some success here, we are always looking to be more effective. Because there are three seminaries in our state, the Commission on Ministry does a

great job caring for, encouraging, and supporting candidates for both ordained and licensed/commissioned ministry. The Regional Minister and a number of lay and clergy persons have been trained in Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation. Many of us have been involved in teaching about racism when invited. With the calling of the Reverend Sekinah Hamlin as the Minister of Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation in the Southeast, we look forward to her help for our team to be more effective. The Christian Church in Tennessee is very involved in strengthening congregational life in the Disciples congregations in our Region. The Region supports, uplifts and partners with congregations regularly to strengthen them for our mission. Currently, 20 Disciples pastors are involved in colleague groups, the purpose of which is to encourage pastors to lead more healthy and whole lives. By supporting pastors of congregations, we are also supporting the ministry they provide the congregations they serve. The Christian Church in Tennessee is partnered with the Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida to serve ministers from both Regions in this way.

3. In response to interest expressed at the January College of Regional Ministers' meeting, as appropriate, please comment on the following questions.

- a) **What is your region currently doing to work toward the goal of transforming 1000 congregations by the year 2020?**
 - b) **Which church transformation resources have you found to be helpful in those efforts?**
 - c) **what else do you need to make your church transformation efforts more effective?**
- a) One of the Commissions called for by the Constitution of the Christian Church in Tennessee is the Commission for Congregational Vitality. This commission, which has called a part-time contract staff person, has partnered with the Center for Parish Development, of Chicago, to offer a ministry to those congregations which request to participate in this ministry. We are also involved in encouraging congregations to participate. This ministry, called Rise. Shine! Church . . . is an effective tool to congregations that want to transform their ministry. This ministry is regularly being reviewed to see how we can encourage more congregations to take part.
 - b) As the Christian Church in Tennessee, through its Commission on Congregational Vitality has partnered with the Parish Center for Church Development, we have found their approach and their resources to be most helpful. We are aware that they have partnered with other Regions as well.
 - c) First, we are aware that a number of General Units currently offer material for congregation transformation and what appears to be an ad hoc organization also offers materials and workshops. Some believe that a single organization offering a number of different approaches and materials would be helpful. Secondly, I believe it would be very helpful to offer very positive stories of congregations that have gone through a transforming process with very positive results. I am sensing congregations are shy about entering into a transforming process not knowing what might happen during the process and what might eventually come from the process. Share some good news stories about transformed congregations to other Disciples congregations.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Tennessee Region.