

Report of the Virginia Christian Missionary Society, dba/ The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Virginia



Regional Staff:

Alisha Bennett	Craig Springs Camp and Conference Center Manager
Amy Moore	Editor of the <i>Virginia Christian</i> – part time
Melinda Floyd	Financial Assistant – part time
Jerry Fuqua	Capital Campaign Director and Minister for Licensed Clergy – part time
Sékinah Hamlin	SERF Minister for Anti-racism and Reconciliation – shared staff
Josh Bell	Interim Assoc. Regional Minister for Youth and Outdoor Ministry – part time
Ken Burger	Executive Director, the Summit – adjunct staff
Ray Gryder	Interim Director of Disciples Men's Ministry – part time
Rita Rodenbaugh	Administrative Assistant
Stephanie McLemore	Associate Regional Minister
Sue Gordon	Office Assistant – ¾ time
Lee Parker	Regional Minister

NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS: 153

TOTAL MEMBERS: 24,491

1. THE WORK OF THE REGION IN FULFILLING PARAGRAPH 20 OF THE DESIGN

Extending the Ministry

The Capital Campaign, "Together in Ministry, Forward in Faith" is the Capital Campaign for the Region begun during 2008. The goal for the Campaign is \$1,277,500, \$1,100,000 for ministries in Virginia and \$177,500 for ministries beyond the Region. In light of the unprecedented economic situation we find ourselves in and after careful consideration we decided to slow the process of the Congregational phase of the Campaign. The Congregational Cluster meetings will now be held in September, 2009. To date we have received approximately \$170,000 in gifts and pledges from individuals

Virginia Spring Women's events continue to be reborn as SPA (Self-Care Prayer and Action) Days. In 2008, six events were held around the state and provide opportunities for encountering resources, direct communication, fellowship, mission, and leadership development. This spring our program is promotes the new "Just Women Magazine" as well as "New Day".

Women's Mission in the Region continues to take on three Spring Projects each year (one related to the study country, one local Virginia project, and one "hands on" project). Last year they contributed over \$8000 to special projects, and over \$15000 to Blessing Box, as well as Scholarship, Library, and Woman to Woman Scholarship funds.

Disciples Men are planning their biggest retreat ever, bringing in nationally recognized speaker and author Phillip Gulley as the retreat leader. The men raised extra funds to do this.

GAP Conference

This summer introduced "GAP" conference for college students. College age adults often feel unconnected to the church. The week was focused on environmental issues and global connections. A highlight of the week brought was Laura Hall to lead music.

Congregational Growth and Nurture

Regional Assembly was again held at Lynchburg College in June, 2008. In addition to dynamic teaching and preaching, Heritage Moments, with costumed characters reminded us of who we are as Disciples. Because of speaker cancellations and venue crises, this



fabulous Assembly truly felt like the Spirit was more present with us than ever. The logo features one of our Lynchburg College student, a new church pastor and a member of the Regional CWF Committee.

The Regional Renewal and Nurture Committee has new leadership this year and is being reshaped to better serve the needs of the Region.

Licensed Ministry continues to be a more vital component of ministry in Virginia. The Commission on Licensed Ministry has developed a training program and a greater effort is being made to link clergy who are seeking additional education with opportunities. The first COLM education conference is planned for this summer.

A Children's Ministry Task Force developed to raise awareness about new directions in ministry with children. The Task Force has developed a Regional Child Protection policy which is serving as a model for congregations writing their own policies.

The Long Range Planning Committee had proposed three areas of focus and priority for the coming year:

Improve Communications

- An emphasis on improved technology in the Regional Office will improve communications between the Regional Office, congregations and individuals. All of the support staff will receive increased training and two volunteer technology coordinators are accessing and making recommendations for data base upgrades as well as hardware upgrades. We will also consider employing a consultant if necessary.
- Our newsletter, "The Virginia Christian", has improved in quality and we are weighing the need for communication against increased costs of adding two issues a year.

Facilitate Virginia becoming a Missional Regional Church

- This priority evolved out of a discussion centering on the importance and the life enhancing and energizing dynamics of the church being focused on mission. At the present time we are looking at the possibility of establishing a network of mission trips that are being undertaken by various groups. Lee Parker attended the recent DOM trip to Haiti and Dominican Republic. A report will be made at the fall spirituality retreat, where the focus will be on Global Mission.

Congregational Transformation

- It was felt that the Extreme Makeover: Church Edition" event last summer was very helpful to those in attendance, but that there was no method for continuing follow-up or support. We talked about the possibility of another such event.

2. VIRGINIA MINISTRY AROUND THE FOUR MISSION PRIORITIES

New Church

The Region offers limited financial support to two new congregations, Shaw Christian Church, Eden, NC, and Olive Branch Christian Church, Lynchburg, VA. Both of these congregations remain small, but committed to growth.

Transformation

The New Beginnings program continues with five Virginia congregations in partnership with Church Extension. Two of these congregations are in the process of combining into a joint congregation, Chalice Christian Church. Two others have developed new focused ministry plans and started implementation.

Leadership Development

Developing **Youth Leadership** is vital to the life of the region. The Youth Ministry Committee is elected and facilitated by the youth themselves, with adults acting as resource people. Youth Congress, an event held each winter, continues to give youth a voice for change in the region. This year youth wrote a resolution on Anti-racism/Prorconciliation that they will bring to the next Assembly. Youth continue to model commitment to Reconciliation for the Region and have taken it upon themselves to make sure Piedmont District congregations are present at regional camping events and that youth of European descent are present at the Piedmont camp. Youth also organize and lead Nature Camp each summer at Craig Springs which provides a rural camping experience for at-risk children.

The Leadership Apprentice Program brought 8 women from Piedmont District churches to the regional office in January 2008 for a week of learning and preparing to serve. The Office of Disciples Women provided leadership and this program was possible because of a Regional Reconciliation grant. These women continue to serve in new ways in their local congregations and in the Region.

Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism

In partnership with the SERF regions, The **Rev. Sékinah Hamlin** was called as the first joint Minister for Anti-Racism and Reconciliation. The combined regions are able to fund this position through the Reconciliation Offering. Rev. Hamlin was led the the inter-regional SERF staff retreat last fall, and we continue to work together in developing programs and events that will further Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism work specifically tailored to the South East.

Chi-Rho conference was re-introduced in the Region in 2008. The focus of this camp was on Racial Reconciliation. Leaders wrote their own theme song and invited Sharon Watkins to issues the final challenge for the week.

3. TRANSFORMATION QUESTIONS

A. The Virginia Region works formally with congregations in partnership with Church Extension’s New Beginnings Program, Disciples Congregational Services, Claiming God’s Vision and Faithful Planning. We hope to plan a follow up event to 2007’s Extreme Makeover: Church Edition. At least two congregations in the Region have worked with the Lazarus Project. Transformation is a significant topic at Women’s events, encouraging new formats, new structures, and new ways of nurturing women’s groups. Each Regional event has some transformation component.

B. Disciples Congregational Services and New Beginnings

C. Pastors trained in transformation work, congregations interested in change

PARTICULAR HIGHLIGHTS AND/OR CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

Staffing continues to be a significant issue. The Virginia Region concluded its first year using multiple contract staff positions to provide ongoing support for the ministries that were previously directed by a full time associate minister. It has worked well, but has limitations. Both the Regional Minister and Associate Regional Minister took 6 weeks of sabbatical leave in the past year. Reduced staffing prohibited full sabbaticals. The Region reduced support staff as well, eliminating a full time Office Manager position now staffed with a part-time financial assistant.

REGIONAL OPERATING BUDGET SUMMARY

The 2008 figures are unaudited. The audit will be complete March 19, 2008.

	2008	2007	2006	2005
Total Income	628,237.81	587,153.02	535,953	501,138
Total Expenses	667,190.42	635,433.38	631,953	595,799
Surplus (Deficit)	(38,952.61)	(48,330.36)	(96,424)	(94,661)

Submitted by George Lee Parker, Regional Minister and CEO, and Stephanie McLemore, Associate Regional Minister