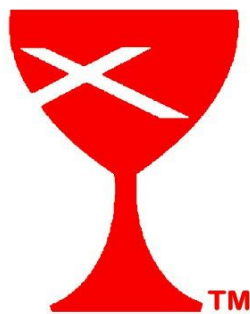


The Nature of the Relationship
Between General Ministries
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



**Report from General Ministries
2009 General Board
Indianapolis, Indiana**

Let me begin with a brief passage from Scripture: from the familiar text in I Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 12: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” And then follows the long passage about the parts of the body: with the observation that the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you” nor the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

For those of you who have attended previous meetings of the General Board, you will recall that the report from the General Ministries has been handled in different ways: Some years we have each been assigned to a specific section of the Board and have presented our ministry’s report only to that Section, receiving comments and input by members of the General Board. Last year we were each given three minutes to present our written reports to the full General Board, followed by 3 minutes for questions and response.

In thinking about the reports of the General Ministries this year (especially knowing how full the Board’s agenda would be), the Council of General Ministries – which is made up of the Office of General Minister and President and the presidents or executives of each of the general administrative units and the racial/ethnic ministries – proposed a different model for our reporting: one that would share highlights and major developments in relation to all of our ministries, but to do it in a way that would enable the General Board to get a sense of the wholeness and interrelatedness of the general ministries of our church. We don’t see ourselves as simply a collection of individual programs or special interest groups, but rather, we see ourselves as a whole: offering distinct ministries in the life of our church that cannot be carried out by an individual congregation or by regions (individually or collectively). But, distinct ministries that see each other as partners in the wider (the general) mission and ministry of our church, providing three kinds of “added value” to the life, witness and mission of all congregations and all regions:

1st: by helping to extend your reach of mission and ministry, both in the United and Canada and around the world. No single congregation, no single region, could maintain the kind of overseas partnerships and mission that we provide through our Division of Overseas Ministries and our Common Global Mission with the United Church of Christ. No single congregation, no single region, could provide for the training and on-going support to our churchwide initiative in the New Church Establishment program – or to giving leadership to our ecumenical witness through the National Council of Churches and the World Councils of Churches, our Disciples-Catholic dialogue, and our partnerships with the Alliance of Baptists, the United Church of Christ, and within the Stone-Campbell movement. 1st, extending your reach in mission.

2nd: by helping to support vital ministries within congregations through networking, training, and programming, for example, in relation to Church Women, Church Men,

youth and young adult ministries; through education in the area of family ministries; through offering conferences, resources, and materials in the areas of congregational transformation and revitalization.

And 3rd: by offering core services to strengthen congregational life in such areas as Christian education; stewardship; managing congregational assets and investment of endowment and permanent funds; providing a program of health care to our clergy and church employees, and offering one of the finest Pension Funds to ministers that can be found in any denomination in this country.

Extending your reach in mission; supporting congregations in their life and programming; and offering core services of support to our congregations, our ministers, our regions our church. These three aspects of general ministries together, and in partnership, represent what I believe is real “added value” to our whole church’s mission, witness and service.

To some in our church, we have looked like we exist in our own silos (and maybe at one time we did). But, that is no longer the case: not only have reduced financial resources brought us together in new relationships and partnerships, but (I believe) the Holy Spirit has called us, and has moved us, to a new place of mutuality, accountability and (yes) unity. Even to the place where all general ministries don’t each have to make their own separate report to the General Board, but where we entrust that task to a small team from the Council on General Ministries.

Eyes, hand – head, feet. There are still different responsibilities, tasks and roles for the different general ministries. But together we see ourselves, and hope that this General Board will see us, as members of a single body, as expressions of a common ministry that extends, supports, and serves our whole church: its congregations, its regions, its members and ministers, in our mission and witness to society and to the world – in making real the love of Christ in all we do and all we are, to all we meet and all we serve.

Two of my colleagues will share some reflections about the work that is contained in the general ministry reports that have been made available to you on-line (we hope you have read all of those reports carefully). First, from our racial/ethnic ministries (Huberto Pimentel); and then from our finance and service ministries (Gary Kidwell); and I will conclude with some highlights from our program ministries.

Our hope is to do these reflections fairly briefly in order to allow time for any comments or questions you may have – directed to any of the general ministries (all presidents and executives are here and available to respond to any questions). And then tonight we hope there will be follow-up conversation as we gather at tables for dinner together here in the hotel.

Robert Welsh
April 18, 2009