

**Report of the College of Regional Ministers
By Ruth Fletcher, President
April 2009-April 2010**

Building on the *Consultation on the Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* which took place in January 2009, the College of Regional Ministers signed a statement called "Strengthening Congregations for Mission." It is attached to the end of this report.

In November, the College focused on the theme of leadership. We heard from a younger pastor in her second call about the trials of ministry and from Cynthia Linder who works with seminary students at the University of Chicago. We discussed the implementation of the new *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry* document, the report of the Leadership Summit held in October 2009 and experienced the process used in Parker Palmer's *Courage to Lead Retreats*. A new handbook for the Orientation of Regional Ministers was also presented.

During the last year, the College of Regional Ministers has been well represented at several consultations. Five Regional Ministers participated in two meetings sponsored by MACC to discuss the support and nurture of healthy congregations (Proposal #9) and five Regional Ministers participated in the Leadership Summit. I represented the College of Regional Ministers at the Annual Consultation of the United Church of Christ. In the coming year, we anticipate that Regional Ministers will also be involved in the New Church Consultation and in the Pastoral Table convened by General Minister and President, Sharon Watkins.

Several Regions have been in a Regional Minister search this year: Northwest, Central Rocky Mountain, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois-Wisconsin. Two more regions are being served by Transitional Regional Ministers: Florida and the Northeast. The College of Regional Ministers provides a liaison to work with each search committee and provides for the orientation of new Regional Ministers.

The Rev. Sandy Messick was installed as the Regional Minister for the Northwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the fall of 2009.

The College of Regional Ministers has partially funded the translation of the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry* into other languages. CRM has also paid the travel expenses of Regional Ministers who have participated in the various consultations listed above, who have oriented new Regional Ministers and who have served as Regional Search Committee Liaisons.

The Regional Ministers and partners enjoyed each others' company and that of our retired colleagues at a General Assembly luncheon. Many Regional Ministers gave leadership in workshops and worship at the General Assembly.

**Statement from Regional Ministers
Regarding the Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):
Strengthening Congregations for Mission
April 2009**

In response to issues raised at the Consultation on the Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at the College of Regional Ministers meeting in Orlando, Florida in January of 2009, we have named below the commitments we hold regarding strengthening congregations for mission. We hope this document will prove helpful to the ongoing conversation of the whole church regarding the adaptive changes needed in domestic ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for the 21st Century

1. Because **SPIRITUAL GROWTH** is at the core of any vital congregation, we pledge ourselves to work with our ministry partners to
 - Encourage the practice of prayer and other spiritual disciplines.
 - Identify and/or create adult faith formation resources.
 - Identify and/or create resources for discipling new Christians.

2. Because we have named **TRANSFORMING CHURCHES** as one of four priorities, we commit ourselves to working with our ministry partners to
 - Spell out the process and create the appropriate documents for engaging in redevelopment strategies: relocation, morphing, restarting, parallel start.
 - Identify, train and engage coaches to work with congregations who are choosing to re-envision or redevelop their mission.
 - Collect stories of congregations who have discovered new vitality.
 - Identify and/or develop strategies that congregations can use for revisioning their mission.
 - Dedicate time and money to the priority of transforming 1000 congregations by the year 2020.
 - Identify marks of transforming congregations.
 - Identify creative models for freeing up capital resources for mission, in cases where the ministry of the congregation is serving the building rather than the building serving the ministry of the congregation.

3. Because we believe **PASTORAL LEADERSHIP** is key to congregational health and vitality, we commit ourselves to working with our ministry partners to
 - Provide opportunities for pastors to regularly engage in spiritual renewal and prayer with their colleagues.
 - Assist pastors in developing the skills they need to lead a congregation through adaptive change.
 - Continue and increase the spiritual support of our pastors, recognizing that this will mean greater investment of time and financial resources.
 - Identify ministers with special gifts for transformational ministry.

4. Because we believe **LAY LEADERSHIP** is key to congregational health and vitality, we commit ourselves to working with our ministry partners to
 - Develop leadership skills for transforming congregations such as multi-cultural awareness, change management, organizational systems analysis and spiritual leadership.
 - Regularly gather congregational Elders for the purpose of developing their skills: leading at the Lord's Table, teaching and caring in ways that nurture health and giving spiritual leadership to the congregation.

5. Because **FEWER CHURCHES ARE ABLE TO AFFORD FULL-TIME PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**, we pledge ourselves to work with our ministry partners to
 - Identify and utilize existing educational programs and/or to create new educational programs to train commissioned ministers.
 - Implement additional forms of effective, accountable ministry as proposed in the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

6. Because new churches and affiliations are increasing **DIVERSE—RACIALLY, CULTURALLY, LINGUISTICLY AND THEOLOGICALY**—we pledge ourselves to work with our ministry partners to
 - Develop strategies to build unity within each of our regions, giving witness to the wholeness of the church.
 - Establish and/or participate in diverse “pastoral tables” for ongoing conversation about pastoral matters within the regions.