

General Board

Business Item # GB-10-0672



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

Origin: Kenneth W. Moore, Regional Minister

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

Regional Staff: (Listing by name, with gender, whether ethnic minority)

- Regional Minister: Kenneth W. Moore, male
- Regional Minister for Leader Development, and Program Administrator for Cotner College Educational Ministries: Sharon Shields, female, part-time
- Minister of Faith Development (with UCC): vacant
- Kamp Kaleo Administrator (with UCC): Gaylene O'Brien, female, part-time
- Disciples Women's Ministries: Teresa Olberding, female, part-time
- Disciples Men Coordinator and Business Manager: Paul Few, male, volunteer
- Bookkeeper: Genevieve Randall, female, part-time
- Administrative Assistant for CCN and Cotner College Educational Ministries: Janeen Bruner, female
- Communications Coordinator: Bethany Grabow, female, part-time
- Covenantal Group Coordinator : Russell Seger, male, volunteer
- Minister of Multiplication: James Gordon, male, part-time

Number of Congregations: 50

Total Members: 7836

States included in Region: Nebraska

WAYS THE NEBRASKA REGION IS A MOVEMENT FOR WHOLENESS IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

Since 2008, the Christian Church in Nebraska has been a Global Mission Region. As a part of this commitment we encourage Nebraska Disciple congregations to remember members of our mission personnel each week in prayer. The Regional Minister was part of a delegation that visited our mission partners in the Middle East last December. He is visiting congregations and presenting programs on our ministries with partners in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Israel.

Members of the staff of Global Ministries came to Nebraska and met with the members of our Ghana Partnership Committee. This is a group made up of UCC and Disciples who coordinate ministries with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church-Ghana. As a part of our Ghana partnership we have built a seminary library, clinic, and retreat center in Ghana. We have supplied our partners with a well, library books, scholarships, medical supplies, musical instruments, and recreational equipment through our mission projects.

The 10th Annual Christian Church in Nebraska Elders' Retreat was held in Hastings on March 12-13, 2010. Our special guests were Rev. Sandra Gourdet, executive of the Africa Office, and Jane Sullivan-Davis who serves as the Vice President for Development of Global Ministries. The theme was "Elders and the Changing Face of Mission."

Three Nebraska students this year traveled to New York City and Washington D.C. in March as a part of the annual "International Affairs Seminar." The theme this year was "Care for God's Creation: What is Our Responsibility?"

The theme for the October 2010 Regional Assembly to be held at First Christian Church in North Platte is "Love Your Neighbor." The keynote speaker will be Marilyn Fiddmont who serves on the staff of the Christian Church Foundation. We are looking forward to offering workshops and interest groups that address issues around the brokenness in our communities and world.

Two weeks of the Region's camping program each year are devoted to offering hope and help to children and adults with special needs. Each year there are two "Adventures in Community" camps for the developmentally challenged, a camp for burn victims and a Lions camp for children who are blind. New this summer will be a "Bridge Camp" for women recently released from prison and those who suffer from substance abuse. Individual congregations are raising funds to cover all the expenses for the thirty women who will be coming to this special camp.

Though GAIN (Grants to American Indians in Nebraska) we join with other denominations and Mutual of Omaha to assist agencies across our state that provide services to Native Americans. In 2010, over \$20,000 will be distributed through grants to agencies that offer help and hope to those who live in oppressive poverty, which is the daily experience of most of our Native American brothers and sisters in Nebraska.

Last summer, campers at Kamp Kaleo raised over \$4,000 around the theme "Share Kaleo." These funds will be used to provide five camper scholarships to "Bridge Camp" and provide scholarships for Native American youth from northeast Nebraska to attend our summer camps in 2010. The mission project for this summer will involve campers raising funds and assembling Church World Service Hygiene Kits for earthquake victims in Haiti.

For over one hundred years Nebraska Disciples have been a part of the mission of Child Saving Institute headquartered in Omaha, NE, to "respond to the cry of the child." Last year over 3,000 children and families were served. CSI recently was selected as a demonstration site for the Center of Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. CSI has developed effective strategies that have resulted in children's improved academic success through early intervention to address these children's social and behavior needs that affect their school performance.

In partnership with CSI, the Christian Church Foundation, and the Nebraska Christian Church and Cotner College Foundation, the Regional Church and Cotner College offered four legacy giving workshops across the state around the theme "Living Generously."

The Christian Church in Nebraska held its first "Miracle Day" on August 8, 2009. Volunteers from churches around Nebraska painted, cleaned, and landscaped the church building housing our new Hispanic congregation. This new congregation had 120 children attend Vacation Bible School last summer and over 600 attended a street festival at the church. The congregation currently has an average of 50 in worship.

Rev. Dr. Jim Gordon was called as Minister of Multiplication for the Christian Church in Nebraska. Dr. Gordon organized a two-day summit on New Church Planting last November. There were 40 persons who attended the summit. Each person attending this event was given a copy of the book *Rekindling the Mainline*. Nebraska has a goal of establishing twenty new congregations by 2020. Our newest congregation was launched with a "preview" service on January 10, 2010. The congregations of CrossBridge Christian Church and South View Christian Church have partnered to launch "SouthBridge Christian Church." There were 120 persons present for the first service.

There are now four denominations participating in our Education for Lay Ministry (Disciples, UCC, Presbyterian, and American Baptists). Fifteen persons are enrolled in the current class of ELM. A new class will be launched in August with a retreat led by Rev. Dr. Vic Hunter. At the request of our ELM graduates, we now offer continuing education courses each year under the heading of "Cotner Communities of Learning." Dr. Dan Deffenbaugh was the presenter of a seminar called "The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel." Rev. Tim Adams provides staff coordination for these events.

Rev. Doug Pfeiffer was the keynote speaker for the Men's Retreat at Kamp Kaleo. The theme was "Transforming the Church Now! Following the Call of Romans 12." Sheila Spencer, staff person for the Office of Disciple

Women, was well received as the keynoter at last fall's Disciples Women's Retreat. Lois LaFon was honored for her eight years as our Region's Disciples Women's Coordinator. The offering from this event went in part to support the women's service project on Human Trafficking. In addition, 203 pounds of food were collected for the Hamilton Country Food Bank. An additional \$675 was collected for rebuilding Bosnia. A book sale raised \$363 for the Woman-to-Woman Fund. Teresa Olberding is the new leader for this ministry.

This year we are sponsoring two Ethics in Ministry Retreats for pastors. We also offer two seminars each year on interim ministry.

There were 38 ministers at this year's Clergy Convocation. The keynote speaker was Dr. Ron Allen, professor of preaching at Christian Theological Seminary, who spoke to the theme "Listening to the Listener."

The Regional Church held three seminars around Nebraska as part of the annual "Evangelism Road Trip". The speaker, Rev. Dr. Burley Herrin, focused on congregational hospitality. The theme was "So That My House May Be Filled."

Disciples are one of the four denominations that have supported Nebraska United Ministries in Higher Education. We have campus ministries on six Nebraska campuses. A decision was made recently to close NUMHE. The four denominations remain committed to working together in ministry with college students and young adults. We have been meeting with additional denominational partners to explore new models for this ministry.

Nebraska Disciples are members of *Interfaith Power and Light of Nebraska*. Dr. Ken Moore is the organization's board president. The purpose of IPL is to mobilize a religious response to the challenge of global warming. We are working to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation, and we are providing people of faith with an opportunity to put their faith into action and help reduce the devastating effects of global warming. Recently Dr. Moore was the speaker at an event held at St. Mary's College in Omaha on Climate Change.

Over 6,000 Nebraska families were served last year by our ecumenical Rural Response Hotline. A growing number of these calls for assistance come from returning soldiers and their families. Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska has received a grant to hire a person to coordinate ministry with soldiers and their families with the hope of reducing the numbers of suicides.

The Region's Anti-Racism team, chaired by Dr. Judy Allen, is planning a 3-day Anti-Racism training event hosted by Havelock Christian Church in Lincoln in April. The theme of this event is "Clothe Yourselves with Love" (Colossians 3:14).

Dr. Bill Tenny-Brittian, managing editor of *Net Results*, will be speaking on "Navigating With the Gospel in Your Local Setting" at an event to be held May 10-11, 2010 at Brownville, Nebraska.

Several Nebraska ministers participate in a book discussion group on "Pastoral Lives". This study is modeled after a course offered by Dr. Mark Miller-McLemore at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

Three Nebraska pastors presented a seminar on "Reclaiming Moral Virtue" on February 7-9, 2010 for the Panhandle Ministers' Retreat. The goal of this event was to show how Christians – clergy and lay – can renew our commitment to morality. The participants all read a book by the acclaimed author, John Bradshaw, who combines psychology, neuroscience, and theology in a multifaceted approach to ethics and morality.

During 2009, six congregations have participated in a Spiritual Strategic Journey toward congregational transformation. Last year, sixty persons attended the Region's introductory training event. We had fifty persons attend the 2010 introductory event. This year, UCC congregations were invited to participate in our congregational transformation initiatives. We plan to work with a new cluster of congregations each year. Disciples clergy serve as coaches to their colleagues and the participating congregations. The Region also co-sponsored a congregational transformation event led by the Center for Parish Development on October 31, 2009 called "God's Mission Needs a Church."

Nearly all of our ministers are involved in one of eleven Covenant Learning Groups for pastors across the state. Since we began the “Transforming Covenants” Pastoral Excellence Project five years ago we have found that our pastors are more energized and passionate about their ministry. We are now into the second year of a second grant from the Lilly Endowment. This grant supports the ministry of Covenant Learning Groups, provides scholarship support for minister’s learning projects and Cotner College educational programs for pastoral leaders. Each year we offer Christian camping experiences for children and youth. Last year we added a “Little Critters Camp” for very young children and their parent or grandparent. We will offer two new camps for quilters this summer. Our Outdoor Ministries receive additional financial support from the annual Junk Jaunt, which last year raised over \$12,000 for our camping ministry. Each fall we offer a youth event for Junior High and Senior High youth. These events are designed and led by the Youth Leadership Team.

FINANCIAL REPORT

- A. *What type of accounting method do you use?* Cash X Accrual
- B. *Is a professional audit done annually on your books?* X Yes No
If not, please explain.

C. *For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, please provide the following information:*

	2009	2008	2007
Total Income	\$226,500	\$230,367	\$240,002
Total Expenses	<u>\$234,500</u>	<u>\$228,569</u>	<u>\$228,597</u>
Surplus (Deficit) *	(\$ 8,000)*	\$ 1,797	\$ 11,406

* This is a tentative, unaudited projection

D. *Currently, what is the total amount of Permanent Funds the Region has from which an “Annual Draw” of endowment earnings income is used to support your operations and programming? What is that percentage of draw and how is it calculated?*

The Permanent Funds are held by the Nebraska Christian Church and Cotner College Foundation, Inc., a separate legal entity that grants about a 5% allocation to the Regional Church each year. In 2008 it made a \$16,000 distribution. We received \$5,000 in 2009. We have been told that we will receive \$9,000 for 2010. The Foundation held regional assets of \$180,204.65 at the end of the third quarter of 2008. They reported a loss of value of \$35,839.35 as of September 30, 2009.

E. *If your Region has had insufficient income or deficits in Part 7 C above, how has your Regional Board and Finance Committee been trying to balance your budgets (e.g. staff reductions, program cuts, larger draws from permanent funds, initiative postponements, new streams of income, etc.)?*

We are projecting a deficit for 2010. We have enough reserve funds to cover this year’s deficit.

F. *What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region’s life and vitality?*

We continue to promote our Annual Fund, Christmas in July Offering, and Week of the Ministry offering, but we are meeting resistance from persons who are concerned that the Regional Church is always asking for money because of our efforts to create additional funding streams to support our ministries.