

Title: Report of Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Origin: Sandra M. Messick, Regional Minister and President

Regional Staff: Sandra Messick, Regional Minister, Female
Amber Saladino, Office Manager, Female
Larry Moorman, Bookkeeper, Male
Connie Robey, Co-Coordinator Journey of Discovery, Female
Bill Robey, Co-Coordinator Journey of Discovery, Male

Number of Congregations: 59

Total Members: 7277

States included in Region: Alaska, Northern Idaho, Washington

“A Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World...”

After a three year intentional transformation process, the Northwest Region has begun living into our Regional Mission Plan, adopted at a Special Regional Assembly in May, 2009. Our Mission Plan identifies 7 Key Focus Areas that will help us live into our Mission which we understand to be:

“Called by God and sent by the Living Christ, we the Northwest Regional Christian Church intentionally engage with one another rejoicing in our diversity and shared gifts, deepening our spiritual life, building true community, acting courageously in ministry and mission, and sharing God’s good news with a fresh voice and a new song. We seek to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.” (Micah 6:8)”

Within each of these 7 focus areas we are finding new ways to be a movement for wholeness both among our congregations and as a regional “community of communities” beyond our congregations.

1. **Building True Community** – This focus area includes strengthening relationships between congregations through enhanced communication, diverse worship in our shared life together and promoting a spirit and ethos of hospitality.
2010 Priority: Beginning renewed conversations with ecumenical partners, particularly the UCC to share resources and programming and build relationships between our members and congregations.
2. **Equip and Shape – Leader Development** – Within this focus area we identify priorities in faith formation, discerning call and gifts and our youth and camping ministry.
2010 Priority – Evaluate and redesign our camping program to better reflect the diverse needs and make up of our congregations, to be more welcoming of participants of our new and ethnic congregations, and to better equip our young people for ministry in a changing and diverse world.
3. **Mission and Sending** – From our Mission Plan: *“As a Region we seek to support individuals and congregations in intentional acts of justice and mercy in their communities and around the world, speaking truth to power through education, witness, stewardship, advocacy and action.”*
2010 Priority – This focus is a primary way we envision our life together as a movement for wholeness and a recognition of the fragmentation seen in the world. Within our new structure, this priority has been written into the charter of our Mission Council which has responsibility for oversight of our Regional programming. Our intention is to make this

priority a part of all of our ministry rather than a separate area that only receives partial attention. To highlight this priority even further we have identified “Poured Out in Mission” as our theme for our 2010 Regional Assembly and will feature worship, workshops and pre-assembly mission events that focus on resourcing congregations for mission in their communities and in the world.

In 2009 we voted to become a Global Mission Region and are now actively moving towards selecting a Global Mission Partner. In recognition of our common ministry, we are working with the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ to select a common GM partner.

4. **Embrace Diversity** – Again from our Mission Plan: *“Diversity is a gift from God that must be nurtured, cherished, and encouraged, as God’s truth is usually too much for any one of us alone. We commit ourselves to the work of healing and reconciling our brokenness and the wounds of the past. In light of our oneness in Christ, we commit to be open, receptive and inclusive of all people, recognizing that we as individuals and together as a regional church will be transformed by our relationships with one another.”*

2010 Priority – Recognizing that our Pro-Reconciliation-Anti-Racism team was in need of revitalization and a renewed focus, we have charged the Mission Council with the responsibility of overseeing our Pro-Reconciliation efforts. Like our Mission and Sending focus, we intend that this will provide more consistent attention and will reinforce our commitment to making pro-reconciliation/anti-racism an intentional part of our entire work, ministry and life together.

5. **Grow our Faith Communities** – Within this area we include our oversight and nurture of new congregations and energizing our existing congregations. We are continuing to see transformation happening within congregations through the Journey of Discovery program, now into its second wave, and the New Beginnings program. Within both of these programs we are seeing a deepening awareness within the congregations of a changed cultural context and the need for new ministries and attitudes to live out the call to be a “movement for wholeness.”

2010 Priority – Our New Church Companion Team had lost a number of members and needed to refocus its priorities. In addition, we recognized that we were struggling to offer consistent and timely support for our new congregations, particularly our ethnic congregations. To address the changing needs of those new congregations, and congregations yet to be formed, we have scheduled a gathering in April for members of new congregations, congregations considering starting new churches, members of the New Church Companion Team and anyone else interested in the topic of new congregations. Originally called the New Church Summit, the name has been changed to Sacred Conversations about New Church to better reflect the understanding that this is holy work as we intentionally hear from those already engaged in nurturing new congregations and seek ways the Region may better support these pioneering pastors and congregations.

6. **Embodiment – How We Support Our Regional Work** – This area includes our commitment to “Living Forward,” which recognizes we live in changing times and need to continue to be open to the movement of the Spirit in our life and work. This area also includes strengthening stewardship including financial resources, our facilities, the ways we make decisions, and encouraging opportunities for sharing resources across and between regions.

2010 Priority – Recognizing that even our choice of office location bears witness to our understanding of mission, we are currently re-evaluating our setting and office space. Out of our commitment to be the connecting tissue for congregations we are seeking to reduce our office expense in order to be able to shift funds towards ministry. We are also hoping to be able to share space either with a congregation or another judicatory in order to live out our commitment to be in community with others rather than set apart.

7. **Structure – Building connections, making decisions, and evaluating our regional life.**

2010 Priority – This year we are living into our newly developed structure which includes a Board of Directors, a Mission Council and the Common Table. The Common Table is a gathering that brings together both the board and council for sharing of resources, but also invites the region as a whole to participate in a time of shared worship, reflection on the work and priorities of the region, and sharing of ideas, dreams, and hopes for our life together. It was the intention that the Common Table would provide a place to recognize connections between the work of the various groups within the region and be a place for all of the region to participate in evaluating our ministries and setting future direction. We are already seeing this played out. At our first Common Table Event held last October the collective wisdom was able to identify connections between the anti-racism priority, camping ministries and new church support. Making these kinds of connections is yet another way we are living out the theme of being a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

In addition to these focus areas, we continue to provide nurture and oversight to our licensed and ordained pastors and those seeking ordination. We also continue to provide support to congregations moving through the Search and Call process and finding themselves in the midst of fragmentation and conflict.