



Christian Church In Ohio  
**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST**  
 A covenant network of congregations in mission



Title: Report of Christian Church in Ohio

Origin: Dr. William H. Edwards, Regional Pastor and President

The following is provided for information to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as testimony of the Christian Church in Ohio's witness as "a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world".

***"A Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World"***

As a regional expression of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), **"a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world"**, the Christian Church in Ohio's vision states that we are **"A covenant network of congregations in mission"**

*We are the Body of Christ gifted and called in covenant together as Disciples of Christ to be centers of transformation on the new mission frontier of our own communities.*



As a Regional Church, we are organizing our work around three regional priorities that grow out of our vision:

- Strengthening Relationships and Building Networks (True Community)
- Leadership Development (Deep Christian Spirituality)
- Congregational Transformation and Evangelism (Passion for Justice)



One of our strongest expression as "a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world" can be seen in the regional church's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Commission (ARC). This ministry of the Christian Church in Ohio remains committed to helping to bring about true community, and a deep Christian spirituality, along with helping people to discover and live a passion for justice.

Currently, the ARC is continuing its ministry of helping pastors, lay leaders and congregations to understand, recognize, and overcome the root causes of racism (defined as racial prejudice plus institutional power) in both our society, including in the

church. Clergy are required as a requirement for standing, to complete one session of anti-racism training.

Four congregations in Ohio have formed anti-racism/pro-reconciliation teams, and several others have expressed interest in doing so. Training materials have been prepared and are being made available for use by Commission members as they work with congregations. In 2010, the Anti-Racism/Pro-reconciliation Commission will lead training for the Regional Church Council and members of all Regional Church ministries.

### ***Strengthening Relationships and Building Networks***

The ministries of the Christian Church in Ohio resource congregations in their mission by facilitating networking with other congregations, sponsoring educational events for the development of local congregational leadership, and serving as partners in developing the spiritual transformation and faith sharing ministries in their local communities.



The Regional Pastors serve as a central contact point for congregations relating to the Regional Church, in partnership with the Regional Elders. Regional Elders are a volunteer cadre of (mostly retired) experienced ministers who serve as an extension of Pastoral Staff in assigned Districts of the Region.

The Christian Church in Ohio is actively involved in the Northeast Inter-Regional Fellowship (NIRF), which includes the regions of the Capital Area, Canada, Michigan, Northeast and West Virginia.

The Christian Church in Ohio is an active and vital member of Ohio Council of Churches. Our regional church supports the work of the Council financially and through participation of members of our congregations in its programming.

The Christian Church in Ohio has been consulting with Christian Church Foundation in the ministry of our Development Committee. This ministry team has developing a fund raising and development strategic plan to financially under gird the present and future ministries of our regional church.

### ***Leadership Development***

In the area of leadership development, the Christian Church in Ohio continues to offer a variety of ministries to support and nurture congregational leaders. Advance Conference (Young Adults 18-30), Ohio Disciples Men and Women's Ministries continue to hold spiritual leadership development retreats that empower and encourage members of Disciples congregations in Ohio as Christian leaders and people of faith.

Through our CYF, Chi Rho and Children camping program, we reach close to 1,200 youth per year. Our curriculum is designed to develop youth in their understanding of the Christian faith and to teach them to live out their faith in the world. The camp curriculum also encourages them to be leaders in their local churches.



Camp Christian has always maintained a high standard of excellence in its program and operation. Now, many more people across America will know! The Board of Directors of the American Camp Association voted to classify Camp Christian as ACA Accredited on October 22, 2009.



The American Camp Association (ACA) is a community of camp professionals dedicated to ensuring the high quality of camp programs, a greater public understanding of and support for the value of the camp experience and an increase in the number of children, youth, and adults of all social, cultural, and economic groups who participate in the camp experience.

During the summer of 2009, Camp Christian was thoroughly and meticulously scrutinized by ACA executives in order to ascertain its competence in six (6) critical areas: *Site and Food-service*; *Transportation* (where appropriate); *Health Care*; *Operational Management* (including safety regulations, emergency procedures and risk management planning); *Human Resources* and *Program Standards*. Though grueling and intense, the process went very well and our camp passed with flying colors!

## ***Congregational Transformation and Evangelism***

Taking into consideration the complexity of Congregational Transformation and the diverse nature of the conditions and scenarios that congregations within the Christian Church in Ohio find themselves, the Regional Congregational Transformation Ministry Team did not identify one single "cure all" approach. The Congregational Transformation Ministry Team is exploring and initiating ways that the Christian Church in Ohio can educate and train leaders, identify and utilize resources, and network congregations and leaders to share their learnings and experiences. The role of the Regional Church is to be partner to resource congregations as they discern their own unique "spiritual strategic journey" of transformation.

Therefore, the Congregational Transformation Ministry Team has developed a Regional Church model of support that will educate and train leaders, identify and utilize resources, and network congregations and pastors to



share their learnings and experiences. This model of support is comprised in networks:

### **Network of Leaders**

A key component of the model is the development of a "Leadership Network" for pastors who have covenanted to become "Transformational Leaders". The leadership network will be intentional in:

- Sharing the outcomes of congregational insights related to the use of transformation resources;
- Creating a "community of learning" through the use of "webinars", so that training and vision casting events for transformation can be held without requiring travel. (*Webinars are events held with the combination of conference call and internet-based presentation*);
- Writing articles on the topic Congregational Transformation for the Buckeye Disciple and sharing experiences at regional events.

### **Network of Congregations**

Another component of Regional Church support of congregational transformation is the development and facilitation of a "resource network" among congregations who make a formal decision and a covenant with the Regional Church to become a "**Transforming Congregation.**" The Pastoral Staff and the Congregational Transformation Team are closely monitoring the activity of the congregational network and will offer recommendations by evaluating new transformation resources and sharing the results with the pastoral and congregational leadership networks.

### **Network of Coaches**

Coaching is an exciting way to draw out from within pastors and leaders the gifts and skills for transformation. The Congregational Transformation Team considers coaching perhaps the single most important resource for transformation and leadership development available for pastors and congregations. The Christian Church in Ohio has trained and developed a support network of coaches to work with pastors and congregational pastors committed to Transformation.

In the area of evangelism, the New Church Committee of the Christian Church in Ohio is working to reach people for Christ by starting new congregations. The eleven new congregations in formation are all, as anticipated, experiencing the "joys and challenges", "frustrations and excitement" of new church planting.

In 2010, we continue supporting two regionally initiated new church plants in the Columbus area. This includes working in cooperation with the United Church of Christ's Church Development Committee for central Ohio. The UCC is a partner in planting a new African-American congregation in the northeast section of Columbus. Also, in October of 2009, Roger Burns-Watson was called to start a new church in Delaware, the fastest growing county in Ohio just north of Columbus.

I praise God everyday for the blessing of being called to serve as Regional Pastor and President of the Christian Church in Ohio. I look forward with great anticipation of what God will do through us as people of faith and leaders in Christ's church in the days ahead.

***May God's Blessings be With You,***