



March 2, 2018

FROM: THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

TO: THE GENERAL BOARD OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

1. Greater Kansas City Disciples continue to promote each of the mission priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our Regional Board encourages our congregations to participate in the Poor Peoples Campaign. Funding has been earmarked to underwrite community organizing training for another three Disciples. One-on-one conversations are underway among individuals who want to more effectively work for systemic change in their communities. Our regional staff of two full-time and two quarter time team members is ethnically diverse.
2. In the spring of 2017 we completed a year of discernment, research and planning for restructure with the help of Rev. Dr. Rick Morse, Vice President of the HOPE Partnership. Among the many changes were:
 - a. An 18-month trial of moving from a representative board of up to 246 potential members to a governing board of 17 that meets monthly and a six-member executive committee that meets only as needed. Meetings of this board are more focused, productive and, becoming more strategic. Directors are younger, discussions are more candid and needed changes are considered and acted upon more quickly.
 - b. Reducing staff size allows for the addition of a full-time staff person with an exclusive focus on new church planting and congregational transformation.
 - c. We closed the regional center and going to a deployed staff model with one exception. The office administrator makes use of a part-time secretary's office and a dedicated workroom in the Merriam (KS) Christian Church.

QUICK OVERVIEW

- Ten trained in ARPR, six in Faith Based Community Organizing
- From representative board to governing board with help from HOPE Partnership
- Staff Transitions (reductions/new/ racially diverse)
- No "Regional Center"
- [Search for RM for New & Transforming Church](#)
- \$500K makeover by Lowes of Tall Oaks
- Four ordained
- Two commissioned
- Four seminarians
- New: Stewardship and Development
- Participating in Poor Peoples Campaign
- New Convencion forming

3. With changes came anticipated staff turnover. The office administrator and part-time finance manager are new to Disciples and to Regional ministry. Deployed staffing requires new ways of remaining connected and reshapes efforts to be mutually accountable for positive and more consistent outcomes.
4. We have revamped our approaches to starting new churches. While we have not given up on the principle of providing a welcome place for all (including congregations) at the Table of the Lord, we now have a growing awareness of the arch of Disciples evolution toward a kind of inclusivity and radical hospitality that some of these congregations cannot and will not likely affirm. It is *not* the position of this Region that we will not welcome congregations coming from traditions that are opposed to women in leadership or may be vocal in condemnation of certain sexual orientations but that any affiliating congregation needs to be willing to embrace and become an active partner with a denomination that is moving (along with the youngest generations) toward a future that is far more inclusive than the Restoration movement imagined in the early 1800's. The reality that many Disciple congregations prefer to operate as if they were not joined in spirit (if not in practice) has hurt this "movement for wholeness and weakened our "brand" at a time when identity has become even more important to those looking for a place to find and grow faith. The chalice must stand for something or it stands for nothing or anything at all. We also know that we need to take seriously the last part of the 20/20 Vision's call to start 1,000 new churches in new ways. We envision new Christian communities that are not only technically new but new in the way they ground themselves in the Great Commission and *mission dei*; communities that model discipleship and the work of God in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. This has influenced our search for a Regional Minister for New and Transforming Churches. (newtransformingchurch.com).
5. Our Region has formed a Stewardship and Development Commission that is working to help grow the practice of the spiritual discipline of stewardship and prepare our Region and our congregations to receive and apply gifts above tithes and offerings. We hosted Keeping Trust – an introduction to some of the best practices with help from Rev. Bruce Barkhauer and Rev. Kirby Gould and plan to offer quarterly webinars in specific areas of fundraising.
6. Ordained and commissioned ministers in this Region have two supporting Commissions to assist with the processes of welcoming new ministers into standing and offering support through the course of ministry. We continue to work toward closer alignment with the *Theological Foundations, and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. We have a commitment to offer required training. In 2017 we continued to develop relationships with middle judicatories in the UCC, PC-USA, ELCA, and UMC to share opportunities for continuing education in safe sanctuaries, pastoral ethics, and anti-racism. We are currently working on an application to the Lilly Foundation for a Thriving in Ministry grant.



“It is the present living generation that gives character and spirit to the next. Hence the paramount importance of accomplished and energetic teachers in forming the taste the manners and the character of the coming age.”

– Alexander Campbell

We were blessed to be able to ordain four ministers, commission two others and to welcome into care four seminarians. Three of our ministers have graduated or are on track to graduate in May 2018 with the Doctor of Ministry degree.

7. In August 2017, our Tall Oaks Conference Center was the recipient of \$500,000 estimated worth of landscaping, exterior makeovers, tools, materials, furniture and equipment from Lowes stores in the central U.S. Store managers came in support of Muscular Dystrophy Association summer camps that have been hosted on our campus along with camps for persons with Sickle Cell, Autism, Diabetes and other conditions. Our Board, recognizing that as a hospitality trades property, Tall Oaks need to have a more responsive governance board, elected to begin the process to reclassify this mission of our Region as a 501.c.3 tax exempt wholly owned subsidiary which may allow it to compete for program grants from organizations that do not fund initiatives of a solely religious nature. Estimated time for this transition is six to nine months.



1. *Loews managers pose after installing one of four wheel-chair accessible outdoor fire pits in front of a cabin at Tall Oaks. Video of the event: https://youtu.be/CkuBY_ajYDw*

8. We were recently visited by Interim National Hispanic Pastor Rev. Lori Tapia who led a boundaries and conflict resolution workshop for our five Hispanic congregations and helped to prepare them to become, pending confirmation this summer in Phoenix, one of the newest Convenciones. This reflects a significant shift of movement for these congregations from tight-knit family-style to a more missionally minded focus. They have been engaged in outreach to undocumented immigrants, working with the Mexican consulate and local immigration rights organizations. Our Regional Board is providing funding to support more participation in Obra Hispana events and efforts to grow the influence of these Disciples in the GKC community.



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Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City.