



Regional Minister Report to the Regional Board 4.6.2020

May our faith in Christ Jesus overcome our fear. May we discern well the will of God and not depend too much upon our own understanding. May hope continue during great challenges. May we love boldly and give honor to God through our words, deeds, and attitudes.

The health crisis that has captured so much attention and restructured much of our church life for now requires us to make difficult decisions in the short run.

Our Regional staff is working hard to keep congregational leaders updated and connected through weekly Zoom meetings of clergy and congregational leaders, daily updates on our kcdisciples.org web page, and frequent conversations in a variety of media with pastors and other congregational leaders as well as with other Regions and General Ministries.

To see some of our work, please become familiar with the 5x/week update pages on our homepage and the CV Buttons below which feature real time updates with news and resources. Please visit our [Regional Facebook page](#) and our GKC Leaders Responding with Faith Hope and Love [group page](#) where many are posting ideas and reports.

Our staff members are deployed, working from home, and observing social distancing. All are well and making adjustments to life just as you all are.

Donna and I are hosting a social work intern from Nicaragua who is serving refugees through Della Lamb. Joyce Obando will be with us until July 6.

The response of Disciples congregations has been inspiring. Congregations that never livestreamed worship are doing that now. Churches that were online have expanded programming to address the needs of at-home members during the week.

Our most difficult challenges and opportunities are ahead of us.

Few congregations will be able to go back to life as usual after the restrictions on movement are lifted, though many will try. Congregations that were on the edge financially – small numbers, high building overhead, declining contributions, no real plans for evangelism and many weary older leaders - must now consider applying for loans in excess of the Payroll Protection Program or face dissolution and sale of their campuses.

There are financial resources held in trust by our Region that can be used for small grants to assist congregations willing to consider transforming into more vital and sustainable

ministries. These resources were given by saints decades ago and have not been recently replenished. They will only go so far. I will be meeting with our Regional Minister for New and Transforming Churches this week and with the New and Transforming Church Team after Easter to revisit the application process for grants. We will also be working with Disciples Church Extension Fund and other general units of the Church as well as gleaning from and contributing to the work of other Regions.

We – the Regional Board and those we serve – will also need to reconsider how we will be Regional Church together. You will have already heard the recommendations from our Tall Oaks, Inc. Board at the April Regional Board meeting. Due to several factors, including declining giving to the Disciples Mission Fund and Regional Support, we can no longer afford what the Region has traditionally been asked to provide. Most of the newer and smaller Regions are in the same situation. Our challenge will be to re-imagine an even more streamlined Regional ministry which draws upon greater collaboration among congregations and with the general expressions of the Church. Ours must be a model which is not only less costly but more expressive of the covenant we entered when we become part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). If the response to the pandemic is any indication, we do indeed work better when we work together, make and carry out wise decisions, and be gracious as well as responsible as we miss the mark.

Everything I know about church history and organizational development suggests that a post-Easter pause to engage in prayerful conversation about restructure is preferable to making a series of reactionary decisions made necessary by postponing the more daunting work of listening to the Spirit, consulting the Scriptures, paying attention to the lessons of the saints who served well before us and the signs of the times in front of us.

Above all, we do well to honor God's faith in us to be and do well as we have been prepared and equipped to do for the sake of future. We are stewards of God's Church and in that role, we are to continue carrying out the Great Commission, assuring a future for the gospel to be shared with new generations. How we do that is yet to be discerned but already some are praying and listening and preparing for the challenging conversations ahead.

Thank you for serving on this Regional Board in addition to your many, many, other duties. In years to come, others will look back with appreciation for your hard work and sacrifice.