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August 4, 2021

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Regional Minister and President

REGARDING: REPORT OF THE REGIONAL BOARD RETREAT

## SUMMARY

Through a mix of meditation on Isaiah 40:37-31, prayer, imagining vibrant congregations well-served by our Region, presentations on covenant, board responsibilities, antiracism efforts, new and innovative church, and honest conversations participants identified three areas of focus for the work of the Regional Board in the near-term.

### • PARTICIPATION

- There are currently 19 Regional Board members (not including Regional staff).
- 10 Board members took part in person or online:
  - Rev. Mary Lou Kegler, John Steinmetz, Rev. James Vertreese, Rev. Neil Engle, Kathy Harris, Jan Brooks, David Roebuck, Rev. Sheryl Tucker, Gerald Jones, Peggy Chandler
- 3 Regional Staff members organized and managed the event:
  - Jessica Lopez
  - Rev. Dr. Delesslyn Kennebrew
  - Rev. Bill Rose-Heim
- There were several presentations and a panel discussion:
  - Rev. Terri Hord Owens – General Minister and President (recorded [here](#))
  - Rev. Lee Hull Moses – OGMP Chief of Staff on Regional Board Responsibility (pre-recorded [here](#))
  - Pastor Terrell McTyre – Director, New Church Ministry of the Disciples Church Extension Fund and Rev. Dr. Delesslyn Kennebrew
  - Rev. Dr. Chris Wilson – Senior Minister, St. Andrew Christian Church

As time permits before September 1, video recordings of remaining presentations will be edited and posted (unlisted) on YouTube and links provided on <https://www.kcdisciples.org/regional-board.html>

- **OUTCOMES**

Following an exercise inviting participants to imagine vibrant congregations well-supported by our region, and writing, arranging, and re-arranging ideas into categories, three near-term Regional Ministry focus areas emerged from a series of discernment exercises. *Note: what you see below the headings are the statements written by participants on Post-It Notes by participants and is represented here without editing.*

- **Develop near and long-term strategy for financial sustainability for our Region and our congregations.**
  - Break-even budget
  - Plan for financial stability for Tall Oaks and Region
  - Region-wide mission through existing congregational efforts (e.g., Micah Ministry)
  - Continued support for congregational Ministry Innovation and Transformation (grants program)
  - Develop and implement a Communications Strategy for our Region
- **Improve networking among congregations**
  - Facilitate and assist congregations working together on an undertaking
  - Promote multi-congregational mission projects – at least one per year
  - Establish a person in every congregation to be a Regional contact
  - Inclusion/diversity, all Regional congregations open to all
  - Pairing of ethnically diverse congregations
- **Support missional engagement together**
  - Missional engagement in the community
  - Focus on and continue support for Ministry Innovation and Congregational Transformation
  - Spend more time outside the church
  - Expand community participation in existing and new Regional programs and activities
  - Identify existing ministries on our Region that could be embraced by our Region (*example: Micah Ministry – based at Independence Boulevard but already supported by several congregations in our Region*)
- Additional focus areas were also mentioned as presumed and relevant to those stated above:
  - **Make disciples**
    - Equip those who are equipping children and youth
      - Create networks of support
    - Emphasize Holy Spirit within each of us – unity through God’s spirit

- Clear and agreed upon statement tying our faith to our goal
- Ministry Innovation and transformation
- Focus on disciple-making through innovation and transformation
- Reach out to and involve non-participating congregations
- Assist congregations in finding “bakers” (innovative leaders)

***One of the most important outcomes*** that we did not name above was the level of vulnerability demonstrated among many participants. The relationships of the team comprised of Board members and staff are slowly moving deeper into trust, mutual respect, and hope for something better than even the good support that we can offer presently.

- We are telling and hearing reverently more of our personal stories as they relate to the work that we are trying our best to do
- We are taking more and more calculated risks by offering Innovation and Transformation grants, talking seriously about what we need to let go to make room for what we cannot yet define and doing that in expectation that God’s providence continues
- We are more willing to evaluate the effectiveness of what we do and holding ourselves to a healthier accountability for progressively better outcomes for our support of congregations and our support of the wider Church

Improving the quality of our collegial relationships is no small accomplishment yet can easily be overlooked when we are focused almost exclusively on tasks completed, the numbers in the financial report, or the crises in play as we try to be the Church. May God be praised in the growing number of ways that we demonstrate mutual respect, concern for congregational and clergy wellness, and practice the faith we profess in Christ Jesus.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW UP**

It bears notice that focus areas cited could be elements in the Future Story that our Region developed with the help of Rev. Dr. Rick Morse nearly five years ago.

Now it would be helpful to turn “it would be great if . . .” into specific action plans put into play with measurable steps, clarity about who is responsible for what actions, identifying sources for human and financial resourcing, timelines, etc.

Given that the Board meets for 1.5 – 2 hours quarterly, and, given the amount of business that will be considered at the September 27<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, there may be a need to schedule a special session this fall of similar length to:

- Review, revise, and commit to work on each of the focus areas:
  - **Develop near and long-term strategy for financial sustainability for our Region and our congregations.**
  - **Improve networking among congregations**
  - **Support missional engagement together**

- Form three teams that will draft plans – each team taking one focus area – and present them in writing before the December Regional Board meeting
  - Teams do not need to be comprised exclusively of Board members. This is an opportunity for two or three Board members with passion for a particular focus area to gather with two or three other Disciples (lay and clergy) to draft plans in one meeting.
- **At the same time, take advantage of activities already underway that support the focus areas chosen. We need not wait until we have everything lined out.**
  - Examples:
    - Disciples Day at the House of Abraham Habitat for Humanity project on October 27 calls for seven volunteers to come work on a KC house for a family.
      - **Jude Huntz**
      - Outreach Manager
      - 
      - 816-924-1096 office
      - 816-289-2851 cell
      - 1423 E. Linwood Blvd.
      - Kansas City, MO 64109
      - [www.habitatkc.org](http://www.habitatkc.org)
    - [Micah Ministry](#)
      - Regional Board members could volunteer together one Monday evening to experience the level of impact being made among some of the most vulnerable yet no less precious among God’s people
    - [Association of Fund-Raising Professionals](#) has meetings in Kansas City that Rev. Kirby Gould (Christian Church Foundation) attends. She might be happy to invite a few Regional Board members to be guests at one of these events or to take part in a learning event sponsored by the Christian Church Foundation
    - If every congregation had a Regional ambassador/contact person, who would be that person in your congregation? 19 contact persons would be a great start and Jessica could host a working lunch via Zoom with \$10 Visa gift cards sent to cover participants’ lunch
    - Promote the Ministry Innovation and Congregational Transformation grants! When was the last time your congregation received up to \$5,000 from our Region to help fund a holy initiative?

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE:

- Board members received an overview of nonprofit and Region-specific board responsibilities and a binder and USB drive with reference materials and links to additional online resources

- The annotated agenda for the Board, along with this report is now available in PDF formats with embedded links to videos, posted at <https://www.kcdisciples.org/regional-board.html>

THANK YOU!