



September 24, 2022

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Regional Minister and President

QUARTERLY REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY

This has been a most challenging summer for Greater Kansas City Disciples. While the conversations about the future of Tall Oaks have gotten the most attention, together we did good work:

- Rev. Laura Phillips applied for, and our Region received a grant from the Pension Fund to provide stipends for a team of part-time summer church camp administrators during the paid parental leave for Rev. Shandra Soltani while she gave birth to a baby girl.
- Rev. Phillips, Rev. Dr. Lara Blackwood Pickrel, and Ms. Jenna Engelken Beck oversaw a successful series of summer church camps for 158 campers at Tall Oaks led by a crew of volunteer directors and counselors.
- The summer church camp administrators built a website and organized registration for summer church camp in 2023 within weeks after the close of camp. Registration is open. Camp directors and most of the counselors have already been recruited. An adult camp has been added to the summer camping opportunities.
- Five Listening/Discernment sessions brought over 200 Greater Kansas City Disciples together, hosted by five congregations. What follows will be influenced by the outcome of the Regional Board meeting on September 26th
- Clergy standing renewals are underway. With more opportunities for continuing education, online standing renewal options that take less than five minutes to complete, a Standing Team led by Rev. Mark Harmon is overseeing the process with administrative help from Ms. Jessica Lopez
- Disciples Women enjoyed a great fall retreat
- Reports from user groups at Tall Oaks have high praise for the work of site manager James Box and the United Church Camps and Conferences staff.
- We are about to welcome Faith Christian Church as our Region's newest congregation-in-information and a new addition to the fast-growing network of Chuukese Disciples congregations. Their pastor – Dayson Marar is already well connected with the North American Asian Pacific

Disciples. He, like most Chuukese pastors is bi-vocational. They have appreciated the welcome given them by the Park Hill Christian Church

- Park Hill Christian Church and Community Christian Church are exploring a promising new form of inter-congregational partnership. They have a proposal that they would like to share with our Region that could become a model for other congregations within and beyond our Region
- Grant applications from congregations for assistance with innovation and transformation continue to be received and grants awarded thanks to the work of Rev. Dr. Delesslyn Kennebrew and the Region's Ministry Innovation Commission.
- Rev. Dr. Kennebrew continues to be a much-sought preacher, workshop leader, keynote speaker and consultant around and beyond the KC Metro. In her capacity as Regional Minister for Ministry Innovation she has represented our Region in the wider Church and ecumenical
- Ms. Jessica Lopez continues to lead efforts to better systematize administrative functions and all who work with her report their appreciation for her patience and willingness to help with GKC Disciples and General Ministry partners with their questions and requests for help. She is planning to do more with and for congregational office administrators in the coming year and participates in a new network of Regional office administrators.
- Our Tri-Regional Partnership Exploration is bearing fruit. (More about that later in this report)
- With leadership from Ms. Annetta Vertreese and the small but hard-working Regional Assembly Planning team, we get to meet together for worship, mutual encouragement and learning, and fellowship in person at the Overland Park Christian Church, October 14-15. As of this date, there are 44 registrations. Have you registered yet?

<https://docgeneralassembly.regfox.com/gkcregionalassembly2022>

Rev. Shandra Yost Soltani submitted her resignation and the Regional Personnel Committee worked to create a helpful off-boarding process. A revised job description draft was created by the summer church camp administrators and will be considered by the Personnel Committee soon.

In the past quarter we have experienced significant division among us. Conflict is an inevitable part of change for the better. In an era when more people are choosing to opt out of religious practice and covenant community, the call to inspire new generations of disciples of Jesus Christ has never been more urgent.

It is important to remember that at our best, in the face of difficult challenges, we Disciples never turn *on* each other but *to* each other and to the One from whom all wisdom flows. We can create brave space to ask and address hard questions. We are and always will be a work in progress – God's work - and each of us is essential to its success and the wellbeing of this community Christ has called together. Try as we might, we cannot avoid making mistakes of judgment and action. We can avoid repeating mistakes. We can offer, receive, and accept apologies as we are led by Christ to do so in the gospels and risk new attempts to be the Church we are called to be.

CONGREGATIONS

- Search and Call processes for interim or senior ministers are underway in:
 - First Christian Church, Blue Springs, MO (Interim Minister)
 - First Christian Church, Independence, MO (Interim Minister)
 - First Christian Church, North Kansas City, MO (Senior Minister)
 - First Christian Church, Pleasant Hill, MO
 - Raytown Christian Church, Raytown, MO
 - First Christian Church, Smithville, MO
- Park Hill Christian Church and Community Christian Church are deep into an exploration of a new form of partnership.
- Raymore Christian Church has recently called Rev. Alan Bailey, pastor of First Christian Church, California, MO to serve as their interim minister.
- Additional searches for other ministerial positions are listed at:
<https://www.kcdisciples.org/ministry-opportunities.html>
- Each search and call process involves a discernment process that involves:
 - Meeting with congregational leaders
 - Providing a MissionInsite demographic report for their service area
 - Helping them to complete a Ministry Blueprint
 - Hosting a World Café event for the congregation
 - Using information from both to help the Search Team craft a Congregational Profile
 - Posting the congregational profile on our Regional webpage and a Positions page on the Disciples Home Mission page
 - Contacting clergy who have entered Search and Call to invite them to consider serving at one of our Greater Kansas City congregations
 - Assisting congregations with pulpit supply
 - Talking/meeting with interested clergy
 - Welcoming the new minister

ORDINATION

- Reverend Ronda Hetzel, pastor of Eastgate Christian Church, Independence, MO, was ordained on August 21, 2022. Rev. James Vertreese, Chairperson, Regional Commission on the Order of the Ministry, offered the sermon.

NEW WORKSHOPS

As a part of my continuing education, I completed a train-the-trainer course with the Faith Trust Institute to teach their Healthy Boundaries 101 and 201 courses. In an effort to make required continuing education courses more available and engaging for our clergy and to do our part in supporting the Tri-Regional Partnership Exploration, we offered the following workshops in August and September 2022

- Healthy Boundaries 101 and 201, online and in-person with a total of 43 clergy in Greater Kansas City, Kansas, Nebraska, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Canada
- Reconciliation Antiracism 101 and 201, online and in person with a total of 35 participants
 - Rev. Sheryl Tucker co-facilitated the 101 courses with me

- Rev. Dr. Delesslyn Kennebrew co-facilitated the 201 courses with me
- GKC Civil Rights and Justice History Tour with local historian Eric Stafford – 18 participants
- Any proceeds after costs for food, and bus rental will go to help replenish the Regional Reconciliation Ministry Fund

TRI-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP EXPLORATION

Ms. Peggy Chandler, Ms. Jan Brooks, Rev. Neil Engle, and I participated with colleagues from the Kansas and Nebraska Regions in the Kansas Leadership Center course [Lead for Change](#) in Wichita, KS, August 16-19. Our tuition was paid through a grant from the Kansas Leadership Center to the Christian Church in Kansas. This course was so helpful that I applied for a grant for up to sixty tuition-free workshops from the Kansas Leadership Center for 2023. I will also participate in the upcoming Equip to Lead course, November 30 & December 1 – also with the gift of a grant to the Christian Church in Kansas.

Other activities included:

- Attending a meeting of the Regional Board in Augusta, KS (with Peggy Chandler) as part of the Tri-Regional Partnership cohort from Greater Kansas City
- Participated in five online meetings with part of or the full compliment of partners between July and September

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Governance Committee is part of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada. The chair is appointed by the Moderator of the General Board. Our Governance Committee work continues to:

- Educate Disciples about our covenant relationship
- Support the work of the Design Alignment Team to draft new language for a part of the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada, engage Disciples in Town Hall Meetings to discuss proposed changes to the timing and work of the General Assembly and the General Board
- Work with the communications and administrative staff in the Office of General Minister and President to promote the work of this committee throughout the Church

It has been my privilege to chair this committee, set the agenda, and host its monthly online meetings – doing so since fall, 2019 – working with some of the most deeply committed and effective leaders in our Church.

- Co-facilitated four Town Hall meetings with our General Minister and President, the National Hispanic Pastor, and Interim Executive Director of the Disciples Seminary Foundation in August and September and will co-facilitate two more scheduled Town Hall meetings.
- I would like to co-host a Town Hall meeting for Greater Kansas City Disciples of Christ in late October. Each Town Hall meeting (on Zoom) consists of thirty minutes of presentation followed by thirty minutes for questions and input from participants. For more information go to <https://disciples.org/covenant-project/>.

COLLEGE OF REGIONAL MINISTERS

In July, Regional Ministers and Moderators met in Fort Worth for a very productive annual meeting. The College began a monthly online meeting for Regional Moderators – introducing them to members of General Units of the Church and best practices in Regional Ministry.

I began serving a two-year term as President of the College and set the agenda for and moderate monthly online meetings. We are blessed with an engaged multi-talented Executive Committee that has already met twice to plan our next in-person gathering and identify issues of growing importance for those served by Regional Ministers. We meet another time each month online around a topic requiring research and deliberation. We are meeting one of our top priorities of offering access across Regional boundaries to continuing education events in Regions. We also serve as a network of support for each other and any Regions that are in leadership transitions.

GENERAL COMMISSION ON THE ORDER OF THE MINISTRY(GCOM)

As chair of the Clergy Support Subcommittee, I get to work closely with Rev. Dr. Chung Seong Kim (North American Asian Pacific Disciples), Rev. Lori Tapia (Obra Hispana), Rev. Yvonne Gilmore (National Convocation) and Rev. Dr. Dean Phelps (Office of General Minister and President). We review and approve or refer standing renewal applications for 170+ clergy who hold standing with GCOM. Currently we are:

- Piloting a streamlined online standing renewal form that connects to a central database in the office of the General Minister and President. We launch this on November 1, 2022. If it works well, we may try this in Greater Kansas City.
- Offering a new continuing education opportunity in the area of Healthy Boundaries in a course designed and led by Rev. Courtney Armento which focuses on Domestic Violence and assists clergy to recognize the signs and make effective response
- Working with the Standards Subcommittee to outline Learning Objectives and Desired Outcomes for required continuing education
- Working with the whole General Commission on the Order of the Ministry to review proposed revisions to the document that governs the work of General and Regional Commissions on the Order of the Ministry.

PREACHING

- First Christian Church, North Kansas City
- First Christian Church, Independence
- First Christian Church, Olathe
- First Christian Church, Smithville
- Liberty Christian Church
- Merriam Christian Church

CONGREGATIONS VISITED THIS QUARTER

- First Christian Church, North Kansas City
- First Christian Church, Independence
- First Christian Church, Olathe

- First Christian Church, Pleasant Hill
- Liberty Christian Church
- Merriam Christian Church (Tall Oaks Listening/Discernment)
- Central Christian Church (Tall Oaks Listening/Discernment)
- First Christian Church Smithville (Tall Oaks Listening/Discernment)
- First Christian Church, Independence
- Hillcrest Christian Church (Tall Oaks Listening/Discernment)
- Lees Summit Christian Church (Tall Oaks Listening/Discernment)
- First Christian Church, Louisburg
- Raytown Christian Church
- Independence Boulevard Christian Church
- Eastgate Christian Church

PERSONAL

Clergy are called to model healthy self-care. To that end I leave the house at 5:10 am 4-5 times a week for a 5-mile cardio walk and exercises, get at least 6 hours of sleep, and take Fridays off with Donna. One night a week I work out in an Aikido dojo and last week I had the surprise of testing for and receiving a yellow belt (at 67 I am the oldest student). A small group of men meeting Wednesday mornings at 6:30 am for a book study made a welcome place for me over six years ago and I have participated gratefully ever since. Most mornings I get to participate in a 6:00 am prayer call with the Swope Parkway Christian Church and my home congregation – Independence Boulevard – puts up with my erratic Sunday schedule and provides an intimate faith community that is deeply committed to inclusion and service. I have continued monthly follow up activities with the retreat begin in late May through the Center for Courage and Renewal. With all five children and all seven grandchildren living within a 25 minute drive, we are fortunate to be able to host grandchildren some Fridays. My health has never better (and my recent checkup confirms this) though my hearing now requires some technological aid – a product of working around jet engines and heavy fire service machinery for many years. Overall, I am energized for the work ahead and grateful to be a disciple of Jesus Christ with you.