

KANSAS CITY REGION 2022

A FUTURE STORY

It was a balmy summer evening at Tall Oaks. The Junior High Camp was entering its final days, and some adult leaders were taking a break by the campfire as their energetic “charges” were expending their last ounces of energy. The sounds of nature, being punctuated with sounds of youthful enthusiasm, laughter, and what might appear to the untrained eye as chaos.

Philip: (Drinking from his cup) What a great day!

(Sandy, George and May all agreeing) Yes it was!

May: Did you watch Jeremy during the campfire tonight?

Philip: Oh—that young man is really starting to grow up.

May: Yes...I think so...just a year ago he couldn't sit still for a minute, and there he was, spell-bound, listening to every word. You could just tell his faith is starting to make a difference!

George: Yes—once again the camping program is doing its magic. It is at times like this that I am so glad that I took a week away from the church to be with these kids. Sandy—you've just come back to the region after a few years somewhere else...were you involved in camping before?

Sandy: Yes, I spent a couple of weeks every summer out here—but I have to say things are really different now.

George: Good kind of different?

Sandy: Oh yes—a very good kind of different. I can hardly believe this is the same program—or even the same region for that matter. I notice just about every program is so much better than from where I came from. There are so many resources for churches, and clergy. You all seem to lead differently. I'm really starting to wonder what happened here.

May: That is heartening to hear. We've been working hard these past 5 years. And its worth it because you not only see it in the kids at camp, in our colleagues, but in our churches as well. It is like everything we do now has a purpose in it.

George: Have you had your new clergy orientation yet Sandy?

Sandy: No, that comes in September.

George: I'll bet that helps make sense out of this for you. You see a few years ago we decided that the region shouldn't be an authoritarian structure...but an interwoven network of disciples! We looked at WHY we were a region, instead of WHAT we should do.

May: It became clear to us in about a year that regional life was all about accountability, and being the resource to congregations when they needed help. What we discovered is that the leaders of congregation had the skills and abilities to make their churches thrive, but our structure had us spending time going to meetings and accomplishing little.

Sandy: Oh, that is still clear in the Region I came from. All we did there was argue about by-laws, and form committees that rarely functioned.

May: That is what we were doing as well. Clergy were being forced through hoops that were not necessarily appropriate for them. Church development was hit and miss. And our Regional staff was shrunk and stretched so many times we thought we would have to include therapy expenses in our budget.

George: That is when we started to think about new ways of being region. We adopted some values that said 1)we wanted an interwoven-network type structure, 2)that our congregations needed to share what they know with each other, 3)That we have to be intentional about being in relationship with each other (and that these relationships were live giving), and most importantly the "hey—lets work together" attitude.

Philip: I'm just a lay person—but I've even...

George: Come on Philip, there is no such thing as "just" a lay person. I've been to 4 or 5 of your workshops—you get this church stuff!

Philip: OK, I was just pretending to be humble. But as I was saying, I've got a lot more confidence in our region now. I used to think that "we are paying our pastor, he/she needs to give us 100% of their attention." Now I think...."We are paying our pastor, he/she should be working to resource other congregations...as well as learning from them"

May: We tell a story in our Region about TREES. How when they put their roots down and intertwine with other trees, they become stronger in the storm than the loan-ranger tree that topples because its roots are not interconnected.

Sandy: So how does all of this work?

Philip: Well take this camp for example. Jeremy goes to FCC. 5 years ago, that church was on the ropes, barely surviving. The congregation was almost all people in their 80's and 90's. It was one of 3 congregations that year that we concentrated resources on to help that church redevelop. They worked with Hope Partnership and our regional staff to make an intentional decision about their redevelopment plan, and our staff coached them.

May: The great thing was we didn't try to fix 20 congregations that year. Just those 3. The next year we will select 3 more to work with. Rather than spread our resources out over a wide area, we concentrated on making a difference.

Sandy: That is a great idea.

George: After FCC relaunched, it attracted Jeremy's family. Now the new people coming in hadn't any experience with Sunday school or anything like that. My church on the other hand has a great program for children's spiritual formation. The Region asked my leaders to teach a course on childhood spiritual development, and then invited FCC and a few other congregations to attend our workshop.

May: That is what Sally does on our regional staff. She connects gifted leaders with congregational needs. This was just one thing out of dozens she did last year.

George: The result was that a couple of years later, FCC now had a great program for spiritual growth for children. They also connected with the Camping program (FCC hadn't sent a single kid to camp in the past 10 years). And the results? Well, you saw Jeremy tonight.

Philip: I overheard a couple of other pastors talking at lunch today. They are coming back to Tall Oaks for a weekend retreat for kids considering their decision to follow Christ. Instead of offering a pastor's class, they are offering a retreat. I heard them invite FCC to bring their kids along, and Jeremy will likely be attending.

May: Just think about it. If FCC insisted on doing everything themselves, they would have missed all of these opportunities. And who knows where Jeremy would be today in his spiritual journey?

Sandy: My church could use some help like this I can't wait to learn more.

George: Well, it has really helped my church too. We are a good sized church, no money problems, great children's program. But we don't do much for social justice or reconciliation. We know racism is a problem, and that we have so much to learn. The region gave us some opportunities there that has allowed me to stretch my congregation.

May: Yes, like our relationship to MOKAN. Our church used to be proud of just sending money, or talking about how we stand with our congregations of color. But part of our new structure was to move us from doing mission "TO" people to engaging in mission "WITH" people. MOKAN was a great resource, but we had to challenge our motivations and think through new ways of working together.

Philip: That is why I'm coming back for URBAN camp next week. Instead of bringing kids from the inner city out to Tall Oaks—we are going to their neighborhoods and running a residential camp out of a church. It is going to be a challenge that I'm looking forward to.

Sandy: That sounds pretty challenging.

Philip: I'm scared to death. But, part of my faith journey is stretching myself. I need to learn about the realities that these kids are growing up with. How can we be Christ's hands and feet unless we get to know each other?

Suddenly a door slams and a girl screams. Adult leader voices are heard checking on the kids.

May: Sounds like they got it under control.

Sandy: Good...I still have a lot of questions. What are we expected to do as clergy in this region? I don't think I could do an Urban Camp.

May: Don't worry. You can do that when you are ready.

As clergy, we are expected to report to the Commission on Ministry every year. They are clearly looking for the usual stuff like Boundary training, anti-racism training, continuing education and a list of books read. But this region also asks us to report the number of DMA meetings we attending, and our attendance in a Peer Group.

Sandy: What, we are expected to go to meetings and peer groups?

May: It's not as bad as it sounds. The region spends some resources in developing Peer Groups. Each year, the peer group leaders receive training. Lists are available on the website, and you should receive an invitation after your orientation, to participate in a group. These groups are usually selected by affinities (age, gender etc). These are covenantal groups that meet monthly.

Sandy: That sounds like a pain.

George: It really is very life giving and totally voluntary. It goes along with our value of being in relationship. Studies show that clergy in peer groups outperform their peers who are not in groups. It improves your effectiveness, and builds relationships that could be beneficial to your congregation's development.

Sandy: How is that? I'm still skeptical.

May: So, let me give you an example. I have a difficult church member...

Sandy: Don't we all....(laughter ensues)

May: Yes...but I was having a real hard time thinking about how I could deal with a situation she had created in our church. My gut reaction was to just go off on her—but my peer group helped me to see where she had hooked me emotionally, because they knew me. They also helped me to problem solve on my own.

George: That was a great example. It works in other ways too. Barney Dude is in my group. He is totally in love with Biblical Archaeology. Because I knew him, and knew his passion, I invited him to make a presentation to our Builders Sunday School Class dinner. It was one of the most exciting events they ever had. I learned a thing or two as well.

Sandy: Wow...that is refreshing. We help each other provide outstanding spiritual growth opportunities for our churches instead of competing. How does the region keep this all organized?

May: We rely a lot on our social media and webpage. You'll be given a log-on to the resource pages as a pastor. There are chat boxes, some pastors provide blogs. There are sermon ideas. It is constantly evolving.

Sally the camp director walks up to the campfire.

Sally: There you guys are. Your kids are running amuck. Do you think I could impose on you to connect with your kids for a while?

George: Ohhhh....You expect us to actually work with the kids (sarcastically).

Sandy: Can I just ask a couple of more questions?

Sally: Can it wait?

Sandy: Oh...I guess. I'm really looking forward to my orientation. This is going to be so much more fun working in this region than where I was.

Sally: We are glad to have you here Sandy. I really feel like we make a difference in people's lives now.

Capacity Issues:

Goal: To develop transformational Clergy Leaders who foster good collegial relationships and teach each other.

A Transformational leader is a person who can inspire a group of volunteers to do more than they ever imagined. This is different from calling leadership that "manages" good congregations, but persons who can help congregations adapt to this new period of ministry.

Regions can have profound influence on the type of leaders it calls through the search and call process. It can empower transformational leaders through training, resourcing and strong peer group relations. The region can also be helpful to congregations in the Search and Call process look at their candidates through different lenses. In order to do so, consideration of the following capacities would be recommended for the region to discuss:

Implications:

- Continued improvement of DMA, including resourcing program with Seminary, local and national leaders.
- Development of formal/informal Peer Groups and providing training and resourcing for group leaders (Possibly connecting with Hope)
- Maintaining mutual accountability of Clergy to ensure they engage both groups (annual standing review) at reasonable levels
- Search and Call clarity to incoming candidates that this is a connectional region.
- Regional Minister, primary staff for S/C and clergy development.

Adaptive Skills to develop:

1. Already the region has a strong DMA that is well received. That group has worked to improve the quality of its program, and the interaction with clergy, including on-line resources. This provides an ideal platform to help clergy explore what being a Transformational Leader looks

like today. This is the ideal platform for lifting up transformational values, and teaching methods of inspiration.

2. Studies do show the effectiveness of clergy Peer groups. The adaptive issue is for clergy to commit time for this important process. The region would do well to discover a way in which clergy can challenge each other to participate in these groups—and the value of spending time there.
3. The regional staff should review its Search and Call process to ensure that they can identify and recruit transformational leadership to the region.

Technical Skill Development:

1. Leadership of the Region should research this specific form of leadership and its implications. Hope would be delighted to give input.

Leadership Development:

1. The first group of leaders to develop are the clergy. Reorienting the clergy to new leadership values can take some time. DMA and Peer Groups are a great way to teach and question this style of leadership.
2. A 2nd level of development would be that of Peer Group Leaders. The region should spend time identifying group leaders, and training them in facilitation.
3. Facilitating search and call is the primary responsibility of Regional staff. Under the current structure the Regional Minister has primary responsibility. No changes are recommended.

Resources:

1. The Region will be encouraged to form a "NEW INITIATIVE FUND" This fund of \$100,000 would be raised to help finance the development of all the ideas that emerged from this Future Story.
2. \$10,000 of this fund should be designated for the development of PEER Groups. Some of this can be used in training facilitators.
3. \$5,000 could be invested in program development for DMA. This would be a grant for engaging people who can teach Transformational Leadership from a number of perspectives.

Goal: To facilitate and resource congregational program life.

The Region has numerous talented pastors and leaders who excel in areas of ministry. By providing a network, the region can provide a conduit for inspiration and the development of leaders. Rather than the Region being the sole source for resourcing, this would require the discovery of skills and providing platforms for resourcing the program life of a congregation.

This could include standard church programming like Youth groups, children's ministries, or women's ministry groups. It could also include innovative program offerings that some churches in the region are already offering. This is clearly an arena where the close proximity of congregations could really benefit each other.

The program development network could also include bringing in occasional resource people from other units of the church like Global Ministries, the Disciples Church Extension Fund, the CC Foundation, or even the Pension Fund. These units offer workshops and services that could benefit a congregation's program life—and usually just need a platform.

The platform developed would include web-links for live streaming and archiving of the courses so that they can be accessed throughout the year.

Implications:

- Discovering congregations that excel in program areas and recruiting them to resource other congregations.
- Eliminating structures for ministry groups—but facilitating digital networking
- Providing at least 12 events annually for lay leader development in areas i.e.:
 - Youth Spiritual and relational development.
 - Young Adult Spiritual Development
 - Children Spiritual Development
 - Cong. Financial Development
 - Women's ministries
 - Men's ministries
 - Music Ministry
 - Senior ministries
- Camping program development including retreat
- New Staff position linked with Digital Media connection

Capacities:

Adaptive:

1. Shift in thinking that the region has to be the sole provider of program resourcing for congregations.
2. Shift in thinking for congregational leaders to think about resourcing each other, rather than just serving their own congregation. This also involves the sharing of clergy time with the wider church to share their gifts and talents outside of the local congregation.
3. Platforms for delivery should rotate around the Region, which may require congregations to open their doors for other churches to participate.
4. Since events will be live-streamed and archived, success cannot be measured by participation at events.

Technical Skill Development:

1. A lot of the success of this process will be determined by the Network Coordinator. This staff person would need to develop the skills to gather information from congregations about programs and resources that would be of value to the entire region.

2. The network coordinator may have to develop the technical skills for linking congregations with digital resources to make workshops and program offerings archived, and live streamed for broader participation of leaders.

Leadership:

1. The Network Coordinator position is a new position. This staff position would likely be full-time and could be connected to the Social Media/Web Master position that would expand the duties of this person significantly.
2. The other reason for making this a full-time position is that the person in that seat needs to have the time to learn what congregations are doing, and evaluating the needs for program development in congregations.
3. This person would also have responsibility for the development of Peer Groups and leadership training.

Resources:

1. From the new initiative Fund, this initiative would receive \$5000. This would be primarily for developing the web platform and live-stream capacities.
2. This new staff position would be funded by reducing staffing in congregational development which will be discussed in the next goal. (See staffing considerations at the end of this report)

Goal: To redevelop 3 congregations that are struggling with sustainability annually, while stimulating the start of at least 2 congregations annually.

Congregational development is very seductive work. At any one time a regional staff can be swamped with dozens of congregations that suddenly have great need for redevelopment. The results are often an over-taxed staff that can help with band-aids instead of the concentrated work required to be effective, or trying to put a lot of congregations through programs that may or may not fit their needs.

There are significant changes that congregations need to make if they are to redevelop. Most congregations just want to believe if they get a good pastor, or \$10,000 their church would revive again. What we learn over and over again is that these solutions only lead to short term gains. Unless we reorient the leadership of these congregations, they cannot achieve sustainability.

New church work in the region has been fairly reactive. As congregations have come to the region seeking affiliation, the NCD committee has been responsive. However, due to lack of funds, the committee has been reluctant to pick targets and start intentional new starts.

The purpose of this goal is to give focus to the teams, and help provide concerted efforts. This will also benefit congregations who must commit up-front to receiving extra help from the region. We have learned that if services are offered for no charge, the congregation invests little into the process.

Implications:

- This area is heavily staffed and costly. Consideration for integration with Hope services and resources (i.e. Leadership Academy/New Beginnings etc.) to share in service development

freeing funds for direct service and grants to congregations. Hope would invest in training local resource people.

- Congregations would be selected in a competitive manner and selected based on their passion for mission.
- Reduced staffing, increased resourcing.

Adaptive Development:

1. Understanding that if your congregation is in need of intensive help, there may be fees involved because of the intensive use of regional resources.
2. Development of an application process for congregations seeking redevelopment, and a selection process for working with those congregations.
3. Existing congregations may need to consider other uses of their space to generate income.
4. Existing congregations need encouragement to open their doors for new and emerging Disciple congregations in their communities.

Technical Skill Development:

1. The region is blessed to have a very competent staff person in congregational transformation. Hope would like to make an investment in Yolanda so that she could work as a Hope contractor with some of its services. This would require time next fall away from the region for training.
2. Integrate Hope services with Regional staff to provide seamless help for the congregation. The staff person would also provide intensive coaching for the congregation.

Leadership:

1. Redevelopment staffing can continue part-time with partnership with Hope. We could work out an arrangement where this person is compensated by work with Hope as a contractor. This would give your staff person some experience outside of the region as well.
2. Currently there are 2 staff people relating to new church development. They give a lot of time connecting to new churches that are under way in the region. A large success in this region has been its ability to connect with the Spanish speaking community. By focusing on 2 new congregations annually, and maintaining contact with existing new churches, these positions may be reduced.

Resources:

1. It is time for the Region to review the financial commitment to both new church and redevelopment. The region has capital set aside for new church development.
2. Consideration should be given towards developing a policy that any church closure assets would go into the capital fund for new church development.
3. Finding sites for new churches was listed by staff as an issue. Hope has some resources available including loans for new congregations seeking rental space improvements.
4. The budget should include about \$10,000-\$15,000 annually in grants for redevelopment congregations.

5. From the New Initiative Fund, \$10,000 should be committed towards the integration of Hope Services with congregational redevelopment.

Goal: To expand our footprint on Ecumenical, Interfaith, Social Justice and Racial Justice issue in the Greater KC area.

Woody Allen once stated that 90% of success is just showing up. This Region on many occasions has “shown up” and been counted as leaders in many movements throughout the city in years past as well as today.

Most of the “showing up” however does not have the Region’s name associated with it. This is partially because our congregational leaders go to events out of their passion and beliefs. If we were to imagine the impact an individual could have if they were identified as representing 60 other congregations our government and people might take notice.

Not all congregations in this region are of the same mind on many social issues—however there are some basics that are inherit on Disciples congregations (Primary inclusion and racial equality). A process for naming the issues for which Disciples want to be counted would help this passionate region focus attention on issues related to doing ministry WITH the greater KC area, instead of doing mission TO it.

The Regional Minister can carry great weight on interfaith, ecumenical and social issues. Regional congregations can get their noses bent out of shape if they see issues differently. The Regional Minister should be encouraged to represent the Region on numerous issues in which there is widespread agreement to represent the churches of the Region.

Implications:

- Digital network would need to be developed
- Since no organization can speak to ALL of the social justice issues of our time, a decision making process that would allow the Region to determine areas of focus.
- Freeing the Regional Minister to represent Disciples on the broader ecumenical and interfaith stage.
- Staffing impacts Regional minister and Digital position.

Adaptive Needs:

1. It is not clear to me if there is a process for naming issues the Region plans to address (there are so many needs) A process for naming issues for Regional response would foster healthy debate and learning. The Regional Assembly could be the platform for this kind of conversation.
2. There would be a need for setting ground rules for civil discourse.
3. It should be noted that there may be issues we disagree on, this would not preclude people from acting on their own conscious. The purpose of this kind of debate is to find our common ground.

4. Freeing Regional minister time and encouraging the Regional Minister to engage in interfaith and ecumenical partnerships around the city.

Technical Skill Development:

1. Discovery of places of potential partnership on social, interfaith and ecumenical circles.
2. Discovery of ground rules for civil discourse.
3. Review of the Regional Assembly process for resolutions, and encouragement of congregations to participate in naming issues of common concern.

Leadership:

1. Often times issues come up with little warning. The Executive team should be empowered to give permission for the region to utilize resources and encourage others to be active in social justice as needed.
2. Empowerment of the Regional Minister to "represent".

Resources:

1. There is a need to link the social justice initiatives to the website, and to keep those concerns at the front of regional partners minds.
2. Development of links to other partners on the website to provide better cross fertilization of ideals associated with these issues.

Goal: To reduce our administrative oversight and operate more efficiently.

Of all the things we heard, this was the loudest. Regional Board in its current configuration is not life-giving, and is a cumbersome way to operate as a region. Designed for a different era, it is imperative that the Region find new ways to utilize volunteer time in places other than in a meeting.

Another goal is to reduce the overhead of operating the Region. Many regions have turned towards virtual offices. This requires staff to work from their homes, and the digitizing of records. The savings would be significant for the region.

Implications:

- Reduce Regional board to a small administrative committee of 6 people.
- Regional Assembly offered every 2 years with emphasis on inspiration and mission with minimal business.
- Consider reduction to a small administrative a record keeping space with program people in virtual offices in the field.
- Digitize records and provide a disaster plan for recovery of records

Adaptive Skill Development:

Technical Skill Development:

1. A phone system would have to be developed that linked staff phones to a central number that the administrator would answer and could easily transfer without giving another number to call.
2. A review of records that can be digitized, and documents that must be kept. Finding a safe place with a disaster plan for recovery.
3. A stipend may be put in place during the transition period to a church where the region can conduct meetings for staff, and do casual copying.
4. The administrator should provide a list of concerns or issues to be addressed for staff consideration while making this transition.

Leadership:

1. The review of the by-laws indicates a need for major revisions. This should be accomplished by the newly formed administrative team as soon as possible with a report to the Region when possible with suggestions for revision.
2. Primary responsibility for moving towards a virtual office will be the Administrator.
3. Primary responsibility for Regional Board revision will be the Regional minister in relationship to the committee.

Resources:

1. Digitizing records could be paid for from the new initiative fund (About \$10,000)
2. There is likely a need for some new equipment for Regional staff. This could be paid for from the liquidation of equipment that is now surplus. (OR simply put, they can take equipment from the current office for use in their home offices—excess furnishings to be sold.)

Staffing:

CURRENT	Title	PT/FT	For Consideration
Bill Rose-Heim	Regional Minister	FT	No Change
Robin Smith	Office Manger	FT	No Change
NEW	Program Network Coordinator	FT	New Position (Funded by combining with women's ministry/social media positions and office savings)
Lisa Engen	Financial Manger	PT	No Change
Mike Graves	Minister of Preaching	PT	????
Edith Mendoza	Hispanic New Church	PT	No change
Tim Mabbot	Minister of New Church	PT	No Change

Jason Ashley	Media	PT	Combined with new position
Yolanda Roseby	Regional Minister of congregations in transition	PT	Position shifts to Hope, or continues with fee support.
Veronica Falleh	Women's ministry	PT	Position combined in network coordinator
TALL OAKS STAFF	Multiple Positions		No Changes

BUDGET: