

Title: Report of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
 Origin: Dean Phelps, Interim General Minister

The following report is provided for information to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Program Staff

- Dean Phelps (M, FT), General Minister;
- Linda Jones (F, FT), Associate Minister;
- Rachel Nance Woehler (F, PT), Associate Regional Minister for the West Area;
- Dave Carr (M, PT), Youth and Young Adult Ministries/Outdoor Ministries and Staff Consultant to the Committee on the Ministry;
- Carol Devine (F, PT), Editor, CCK News;
- Lon Oliver (M, PT), District Minister to Districts 10 and 11.

Support Staff

- Barbara Gamboe (F, FT);
- Terry Royster (F, FT);
- Glori Cope (F, PT), West Area.

Congregations

Congregations Listed	205	
Active Congregations	167	
Worship Attendance 1-25	35	21%
Worship Attendance 26-50	52	31%
Worship Attendance 51-100	43	26%
Worship Attendance 101-200	25	15%
Worship Attendance 201-350	10	6%
Worship Attendance 351+	2	1%

Clergy

Clergy with Standing	372	
Ordained	312	84%
Commissioned	60	16%
Female	120	32%
Male	252	68%
African American	25	7%
Asian	4	1%
European descent	342	92%
Hispanic	1	<1%
Retired Inactive Clergy	126	34%
In Congregational Settings	181	49%

The Christian Church in Kentucky comprises all Disciples congregations within the state of Kentucky. No congregations from outside the state are affiliated with the Region. It has one area ministry in Western Kentucky. The Area ministry consists of all the congregations in the Central Time Zone. The West Area has its own board and calls its own Associate Regional Minister for the West Area who is accountable to the General Minister. Congregations in the West Area support the ministry through giving that is over and above giving to Disciples Mission Fund. The West Area Board also manages and staffs Camp Kum-Ba-Ya, one of the Region's two outdoor ministry sites.

In 2019 the West Area scaled its ministry to a sustainable position, rebuilding in proper communion with the CCK, and seeing and sharing all of the new life that God is planting among us. The Area is redesigning its communications tools and preparing a West Area Workshops event.

The Mission Statement for the Christian Church in Kentucky was developed in 2016 during a Board retreat:

To Care, Connect, and Equip churches and leaders to spread the gospel into all the world.

A Region in Transition

The Region celebrated the ministry of Greg Alexander as he retired effective April 30, 2019. Greg had served the Christian Church in Kentucky for 27 years, 15 as General Minister (Kentucky's constitutional term for the regional minister executive).

The Region called Dean Phelps to serve as Interim General Minister while the executive search is in progress. Phelps is not only a Kentucky native, but he also brings a variety of regional ministry experience to the position. He has served on the staff of four other regions. His regional ministry experience includes serving as the interim regional minister with the Oklahoma and Central Rocky Mountain regions.

The Region's Executive Search Committee is working with John Mobley, regional minister for Alabama-Northwest Florida, as the search consultant. Seven persons serve on the Executive Search Committee that represent the generational, geographic, and ethnic diversity of the Kentucky Region.

The Kentucky Region held a called regional assembly in August 2019 to consider amendments to the constitution that will streamline the makeup of the regional board. The changes replace the district-driven model with a board of at large members. The criteria for board nominations are designed to satisfy ethnic, gender, clergy status, age, and geographic diversity. The changes will take effect with the 2020 Regional Assembly.

Pastor Peer Learning Communities (3L Groups)

Pastor Peer Learning Communities continue to be a key component of the Region's priority to equip and care for pastors who are serving congregations so that these pastors can be agents of transformation in their congregations. In 2019, new peer groups were launched that focused on bi-vocational ministers and on ministers with a commitment to social justice ministry.

Pro-Reconciliation, Anti-Racism Initiative

The Region has experienced several stops and starts with this all-important ministry, even with the dedicated work of individuals on the Region's Reconciliation Team. However, we achieved new movement in this area due to the collaborative focus of regions that are part of the Southeast Regional Fellowship (SERF).

Representatives of the eight SERF regions gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 3-4 for an anti-racism pro-reconciliation train the trainer event. The training was provided by the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. In addition to the Interim General Minister and regional moderator, six people from Kentucky attended to prepare as trainers. The trainers, in collaboration with the Reconciliation Team, developed a curriculum and have used it for two pilot training events, one in Louisville and one in the West Area. A third pilot training event is being planned for central Kentucky.

The Committee on Ministry plans to bring a resolution to the 2020 regional assembly that will require Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation training as a condition for maintaining ministerial standing. One challenge facing the Region as it plans to offer AR/PR training is the ratio of white clergy to clergy of color. In the population of clergy with standing in Kentucky, there are 11 white clergy for every clergy person of color. This will present a challenge as anti-racism pro-reconciliation training requires ethnic diversity among the participating students to be most effective.

New Church Ministries

The Region's New Church Team has enjoyed success in setting up the infrastructure for a strong new church ministry--policies, community, communication, funding, support ministries, leadership, connection to the New Church Ministry leadership and community. Opportunities abound for new church plants in the region; however, as in other areas of ministry, the greatest challenge is cultivating the gifts for church planting and inspiring potential planters to take the leap.

The Region currently reports five congregations in formation.

Green Chalice

The Green Chalice ministry, which began as a ministry of the Christian Church in Kentucky, continues to grow. We have, for the past two years, worked in partnership with Disciples Home Missions on this important ministry. Congregations across the church have signed up to be Green Chalice congregations, with some earning the distinction of being Green Chalice certified.

Carol Devine has led the work of Green Chalice to this point while also serving full-time as the pastor of Providence Christian Church in Nicholasville, Ky. Looking ahead to 2020, a new partnership with Week of Compassion and a grant from the Oreon E. Scott Foundation will enable Carol to expand her work on behalf of Green Chalice. While we would love to see this ministry as a full-time priority ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we celebrate the opportunity for growth into new areas of service and education.

Outdoor Ministries

The Region is blessed to be able to provide opportunities for children and youth to form faith and friendships at two camp facilities. Camp Wakon'Da-Ho is located in south central Kentucky and provides a pastoral setting for camp experiences. The site committee is looking to add a pool and a new bathhouse in 2020.

Camp Kum-Ba-Ya is located on the shores of Kentucky Lake in the Jackson Purchase section of Kentucky. The lakeshore setting allows Kum-Ba-Ya, in addition to traditional camps, to offer sailing camps for Chi-Rho and CYF aged youth. Camp Kum-Ba-Ya offered Adult Sailing Camp for the first time in the summer of 2019. To form faith and friendships on the shore of a lake seems almost like something New Testament.

Both camps were able to operate without a financial loss in 2019.

Ecumenism

The Region is a strong member of the Kentucky Council of Churches and its efforts to re-imagine its role as an ecumenical agency. Many of the standing committees of the Council are staffed in part by younger, activist Disciples seeking to make a difference. Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, pastor of East Second Street Christian Church in Lexington, serves as the Council's Executive Director.

Lexington Theological Seminary

The Region maintains its close relationship with Lexington Theological Seminary, and we rejoice with them in the seminary's emergence from exigency. The board and the administration of the seminary have done an excellent job over the past 10 years to bring the seminary back to a position of viability with a renewed focus on its mission to train people for service in congregations.

We continue to see a trend of congregations moving from full-time to part-time ministers due to membership decline and the cost of health care for pastors. Escalating health care costs are often the determining factor in the ability of a congregation to call a full-time pastor. Lexington Theological Seminary and others are providing training opportunities for congregational ministers outside of the traditional path through the Master of Divinity to ordination.

The Region is working closely with the Seminary in its research to understand the nature of bi-vocational ministry and the circumstances that make it successful. The transition from full-time to part-time ministry is more than a budget shift for

congregations. It represents a significant culture shift. It is hoped that the partnership between the Region and the Seminary will lead to resources that can help congregations successfully make the transition to bi-vocational ministry.

Reclaiming the Role of Elders

As the need for bi-vocational ministers increases, the need to cultivate the gifts for ministry among members of the congregation also increases. When the churches of the Stone-Campbell movement were at our best, the minister functioned as an elder among elders, with primary responsibility for preaching and teaching. Elders were not only those who offered prayers at the communion table, but they also shared in the care, worship, and administrative ministries of the church. While many congregations have retained this understanding, the Region has a stake in helping rekindle the ministry and leadership of elders and deacons.

Creating a Culture of Call

The demand for bi-vocational ministers far exceeds the supply. If you ask the Interim General Minister what keeps him up at night, it is the concern that the Region cannot help smaller attendance congregations secure solid preaching and teaching leadership from persons who understand and appreciate the heritage and the values that are part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Disciples have historically relied on the leadership of laypersons in the church. The Region can help by providing opportunities for connecting with one's own call and gifts for ministry.

Connection

While this is not unique to Kentucky, the churches of the Region have, in many ways, lost sight of one another. The structures that used to connect us no longer fit the culture and context of our ministry. The Region is looking at ways to bring churches together so that they realize that they are not alone. For example, a church in the Region invited the Interim General Minister to visit and offer a workshop on the role of elders. They extended the invitation to other churches, and on the evening of the event, elders from three congregations gathered, learned, and shared their experiences.

Ohio Partnership

Kentucky is one of five regions providing regional ministry support to the Christian Church in Ohio. In addition to serving Kentucky congregations, the Interim General Minister provides ministries of caring, connecting, and equipping to 25 congregations in southern Ohio. These include urban churches in the greater Cincinnati area as well as Appalachian churches in the southeast part of the state.

2021 General Assembly

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky looks forward to welcoming Disciples back to where the movement began. Come to the state that elected Disciples as Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State. Please join us for General Assembly, July 31 to August 4, 2021.