

Report to the Regional Assembly

Eugene James, Regional Minister

May 4, 2013

One fact has become abundantly clear to me. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region is blessed with very dedicated and committed volunteers. I thank God for those who consistently and unselfishly demonstrate their love for Christ and the Church by the work they do that benefits the Region in so many ways. From clergy that are among those who help care for the Crystal Conference center to the laypersons that regularly assist at the Regional office, and all who work so diligently on any and everything needed to sustain the ministry to which God has called us. I am especially appreciative of the work of the Regional Elders, a volunteer group that is a blessing to me as well as the congregations of the Region. I also want to recognize that Super Volunteer, Captain Dick Murphy, who does so much to benefit the ministry at the Crystal Conference center, working from the mother of all "Honey Do" lists. There are individuals that are truly gifted in many ways and it is an abundant blessing to have one of them in our midst. The Michigan Region has been so graced in the person of the Rev. Neil Topliffe. From providing invaluable assistance in the restructure of the Regional website to taking the initiative to revive fellowship among clergy on the west side of the Region, he has proven his commitment to his call to ministry even in "retirement."

The second "Ministry of the Eldership" workshop conducted by the Regional Elders took place on March 2, 2013 at Triumphant Temple of Praise Christian Church, Flint. It was well attended including several pastors. We express our gratitude to Pastor Gilliard and the saints at TTOP for the very excellent work they performed as hosts for the event.

Plans are moving forward for The Gospel in Action – Detroit 2013. We are encouraging as many congregations as possible to participate in the Regional Kick Off for this ministry on Saturday, May 18, 2013 by sending / bringing volunteers. The Gospel in Action is an ecumenical mission outreach ministry of the Michigan Region, under the auspices of the Ecumenism Commission. It is an outgrowth of collaborations developed among Disciples Peace Week, initiated by Central Woodward Christian Church, the outreach partnership between Northwestern Christian Church and the Northwest Community Block Cub Association, Rippling Hope, and Motown Mission, a ministry of the United Methodist Church, that began in the summer of 2011. The state representative for the district that encompasses Northwestern joined the collaboration in 2012, which expanded the number of households that qualified for services. There were 497 volunteers, representing 43 volunteer groups. States represented included Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, Georgia, Illinois, South Dakota, and the province of

Ontario. Faith traditions represented were Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian, and Non-Denominational. There were 643 projects completed at 281 homes. Also, 22 vacant lots were cleaned up, 13 yards mowed, and 18 vacant houses were boarded up. A highlight for 2012 was the September Interfaith Work Day done in conjunction with observances of 9-11. Muslims and Christians working together to be a blessing to people in the city of Detroit.

We are pleased to announce that the Regional Commission on the Ministry, in partnership with Christian Theological Seminary, will offer a five class Disciples History and Polity course again this summer. The classes will meet June 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. Professor Scott Seay will be the instructor. To register for the course, please contact the Regional office.

The Region has renewed the partnership with the Kinshasa District of the Community of Disciples of Christ in the Democratic Republic of Congo. **“The partnership is being established based on criteria that recognize our common desire to act out our call to mission together. The purposes of this partnership are to expand on ecumenical and missionary horizons of our local churches in Michigan and Kinshasa, to assume responsibilities for each other, and to learn reciprocally from each other’s faith.”** The formal agreement was signed by Rev. Mathieu Mulumba, District Minister of the Kinshasa District, Rev. Eliko Bonanga, President and Legal Representative, 10th Community of the Disciples of Christ in the Congo, Rev. Sandra Gourdet, Executive, Africa Office, and the Regional Minister as a part of the Worship service celebrating the partnership August 17, 2012 at the Lemba Church in Kinshasa. The Regional Minister was there with a group from other parts of the United States with interests in the Congo that also visited congregations in Mbandaka and Brazzaville.

The Women’s Ministry will be establishing lines of communication with the Women’s Ministry in Kinshasa, our partner District in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The women in Kinshasa are anxious and excited to make contact with the women of the Michigan Region. The Women’s Ministry will be sponsoring the president of Women’s Ministries in the Kinshasa District to attend the 2014 Quadrennial Assembly.

We are grateful for your financial support of the Region, particularly those congregations that have included contributions to the Region in their budget. We would urge those congregations not doing so now to prayerfully consider making that commitment. The Annual Fund giving is a blessing and the anticipation is for an even greater blessing in 2013.

On May 6, 2012, Rev. Izabella Hutzler was ordained at Memorial Christian Church, Ann Arbor. We thank God for the unique gifts she brings to ministry. On October 21, 2012, Rev. Jill Forton was ordained and installed as Senior Pastor at Cascade Christian Church, Grand Rapids. She is the congregation’s first female Senior Pastor, to God be the glory. On December 2, 2012, Rev. Gregory Bryant was installed as Senior Pastor at United Christian Church, Detroit. On April 21, 2013, Rev. Susan Wirth was ordained at Cascade Christian Church in a glorious celebration.

During the month of May 2012, Bethany Christian Church celebrated 100 years of ministry in the city of Detroit. During the month of October 2012, First Christian Church, Lansing celebrated "Following Jesus 100 Years So Far".

The Region maintains a long-term, established relationship with the United Church of Christ, Michigan Conference. There is reciprocal representation on each Board. We share in leadership training and the provision of resources for commissioned and ordained clergy. We look forward to working closely with the new Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Campbell Lovett, to revive cooperative programs done in the past and strengthening our partnership.

The camp program at Crystal is in need of a major overhaul to be relevant in the twenty-first century and to reclaim its mission as a ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region. We thank God for the insight of Pastor Jill Forton as she works in her role as chair of the Program Committee of the Crystal Commission to spearhead the essential work necessary to accomplish this task.

On Saturday, April 27, 2013, I was present at Burt Lake Christian Church for the dedication of the new addition to the church building. It was a glorious musical service that featured a cross section of talent from the congregation. Congratulations to Pastor Glen McIntyre and the saints at Burt Lake for their dedication, commitment, and hard work to enhance their facility to continue over one hundred years of Disciple witness in the community.

Humbly submitted,

Eugene James, Regional Minister