WHOLENESS IN A FRAGMENTED CHURCH:
A CALL TO A NEW DAY IN REGIONAL MINISTRY

by

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Project

Presented to the Faculty of the
Brite Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

Fort Worth, TX

December 2012
WHOLENESS IN A FRAGMENTED CHURCH:
A CALL TO A NEW DAY IN REGIONAL MINISTRY

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Introduction

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)\(^1\) functions in three main expressions: congregational (local), regional (middle judicatory), and general (denominational). The thirty-three regions (and those leading them) serve as the connecting link between the local and denominational expressions of the CC(DoC). Thus it is vitally important that regional leadership consistently interprets changing times and ministry contexts in order that this vital link is one which promotes strong, growing, and effective ministry.

Over time, regional ministers have become enmeshed in the historic struggle between the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and that of autonomy/freedom, which are woven into the fabric of the CC(DoC). This is particularly evident as regional ministers seek to transform structures and ministries in order to strengthen regions as effective, connected, and growing communities of faithful congregations.

This project’s goal is to offer suggestions regarding prioritization and realignment of the identity and functions of regional ministers in these new and rapidly changing times. Utilizing survey results and follow-up interviews with several regional ministers of the CC(DoC), ministry role and/or function reprioritization strategies will be identified which result in ministry which more effectively connects, strengthens, and grows congregations and/or intra-congregational ministries.

Specifically, effective “connections” would be demonstrated by an increase in congregations (or individuals/groups from different congregations) working together toward common ministry goals. “Strengthening” of ministry would be demonstrated by an increased resiliency in recovery from financial setbacks, contextual changes, and unexpected events (such as natural and/or human-made disasters). “Growth” in ministry would be demonstrated by an increase in the

\(^1\) Hereafter referred to as the CC(DoC).
number of people and congregations actively involved in ministry endeavors, both individually and in coordination with one another.

In order to fulfill the purpose of this project, the basic matters to be considered/dealt with are the following: (1) the development of the identity and functions of regions and regional ministers in the CC(DoC), with a focus on the pastoral identity and functions of regional ministers since the time of Restructure;\(^2\) (2) the differences, as described by regional ministers, between expected (optimal) and actual (in-practice) pastoral identity and ministry priorities (functions);\(^3\) and (3) the description and evaluation of three regions which are engaged in attempts to redefine and restructure the pastoral identity and function of regional ministers in light of their contexts, stated goals, and optimal ministry priorities.

Chapter One traces the background, beginnings, and development of regions up to contemporary time (and thus the definition and expectations of leadership within them). It also analyzes major documents which have been used historically in the CC(DoC) in coming to an understanding of the role and functions of regional ministry.\(^4\) This chapter gives a foundation and context for the rest of the project. In offering this initial and most current survey, this project provides an initial contribution for future studies.

\(^2\) Officially approved in 1968, Restructure in many ways prioritized the core value of covenant/unity over that of autonomy/freedom. This can be seen in *The Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Indianapolis: Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] in the United States and Canada, 1968); this emphasis holds in the final, approved *The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Indianapolis: Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] in the United States and Canada, updated 2005).

\(^3\) *The Welcome to Regional Ministry: An Orientation Manual for New Regional Ministers*, updated edition published in Indianapolis in 2009, is the source of six main ministry priorities, which regional ministers will be asked to order according to optimal (what they see as expected) and actual (in-practice) priorities. Of note is the fact that this document, though written for the College of Regional Ministers and in common use, has not been officially approved by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This document may be requested through the Office of General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, IN. These six main ministry priorities are first identified and described in D. Newell Williams, *Ministry Among Disciples: Past, Present, and Future*, The Nature of the Church Study Series, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1985).

\(^4\) Documents including Barton W. Stone’s *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* and Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address, The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, and The Nature of the Church series, as well as selected writings of Anthony Dunnivant, D. Newell Williams, Colbert S. Cartwright, D. Duane Cummins, W. Clark Gilpin, Richard L. Hamm, and others were consulted. (See bibliography.)
Chapter 2 seeks to answer the question: How do CC(DoC) regional ministers currently understand their pastoral role and functions? Data obtained through a survey of regional ministers is compiled and analyzed utilizing both systems theory and a polarity model to examine the effects which the historic underlying tensions between unity (covenant) and autonomy (freedom) have had on the role and functions of the regional expression of the CC(DoC). Specifically, the role and functions of regional ministers is examined in the context of relationships between regions and the general church and between regions and the congregations they seek to connect in strong and effective ministry. Characteristics commonly agreed to among the varied CC(DoC) definitions of region/regional ministry are identified, as well as those unique to regions’ particular contexts and/or historical identity development.

Finally, Chapter 3 utilizes a case study approach to further study three regions which are experiencing new strength, growth, and connection as a result of new priorities of regional leadership roles and functions as they effectively manage the polarities of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom in their unique contexts.

Central to all three portions of the project is the historic struggle in the CC(DoC) between the core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. This struggle can be clearly seen from the context of middle judicatory (regional) ministry from the beginnings of what would become the CC(DoC), through the Restructure process and its results, and into current realities of regional

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5 The approach and analysis methods used in Roy M. Oswald and Barry Johnson’s *Managing Polarities in Congregations: Eight Keys for Thriving Faith Communities* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010) as well as Peter L. Steinke’s *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006) will be used as guides for this examination and analysis. Regional ministry is set in the midst of two “polarities”: the historic tension between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom; and the functional tension inherent in regions’ ministry location between congregations and the general church. It is my contention that this second “polarity” is affected, if not fueled and driven, by the first; therefore, this project will focus on the more pervasive “polarity” of covenant/unity vs. autonomy/freedom.
ministry. Nowhere in our tradition is this struggle more apparent than in the pastoral identity, role, and functions of regional ministers. As regions seek to transform for survival and/or new vitality and effectiveness, this covenant/unity vs. autonomy/freedom struggle continues. This project will give regional ministers a helpful resource as they seek to effectively lead regions in serving as strong links between congregational and general expressions of church.

Mike Breen’s *A Passionate Life* guides individuals and small groups through spiritual renewal and revitalization. Breen describes the current social and cultural climate as one of “seismic change” and states that the very ground underneath what has been viewed as “normal” is radically shifting. Big cracks are opening in the foundations of “reality” as surrounding cultures identify it. Huge underlying “tectonic plates” of world cultures (and religions) are shifting into new relationships—sometimes slowly, sometimes in large jumps!

In the midst of this larger picture of massive social and cultural shift, regional (middle judicatory) ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) also finds itself structurally caught in the middle of contemporary Disciples life. On one hand, regions are called “(1) to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region; and (2) to establish, receive, and nurture congregations in the region, providing help, counsel, and pastoral care to members, ministers, and congregations in their mutual relationships…” On the other hand, regions are called “to relate them to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church,” and “to call the general expression of the

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6 “Restructure” refers to a process which culminated in 1968 with a major structural realignment which prioritized unity over autonomy. As this process occurred, many congregations which prioritized autonomy over unity chose to leave the CC(DoC), remaining as independent Christian Churches. The name of the denominational body itself changed from the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.


8 *The Design*, para. 20.

9 Ibid.
church to an awareness of the needs both of congregations and of regions, ... help[ing] to relate the general expression to the life and work of congregations.”

In addition to the struggles and challenges of adapting and maintaining/regaining relevance in the broader societal and cultural venues, these dual expectations place regional ministry between the congregational and general manifestations of church, each of which are struggling to achieve and/or maintain spiritual and missional vitality in differing circumstances and realities. In essence, regions are called to exercise the authority of covenant, calling and drawing congregations together in unity as one in the body of Christ and the world. At the same time, regions are called to respect the unique context (autonomy/freedom) of individual congregations within them. One difficulty in exercising this call lies in the reality that, in words and/or practice, many congregations prioritize autonomy over covenant with other congregations and/or the regional manifestation of church. This struggle between autonomy and covenant has been, is, and will probably continue to be a large deterrent to unity and mission in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In these quickly changing times, many regions have indeed found the very ground beneath the “way it’s always worked before” shifting, splitting, and re-forming in an unrecognizable fashion. The temptation is strong to grab quickly for the first “quick-fix” solution that looks good. In order to approach ministry effectively in these times of major cultural and societal change, we will first journey back in history to the formation of regions and examine the journey they have taken to the present. Some of this examination will look at the formation (and re-formation) of the general church as it came together (and split apart) around them. In the process, better understanding may be gained of the historical trajectories of these regions, their present struggles

\[10\] Ibid., para. 25.
and strengths, and the directions they find themselves drawn in as they discern and envision the future.

It is of vital importance that in discerning the future, regions learn from the past and claim the present realities, strengths, and challenges. It is to that task we now turn.
Chapter One
Emergence and Development of Regional Leadership Ministry

Section 1. The Beginnings of Cooperative Ministry Leadership

According to historians/theologians Anthony L. Dunnavant and D. Duane Cummins, the Stone-Campbell movement has claimed four basic ideals: restoration, unity, liberty/freedom, and mission. From the start, the tension between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom has affected the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the movement out of which the CC(DoC) grew. Was it more important for each congregation to be free from any church organization above or beyond its own doors (liberty/freedom), or more important for congregations to be united in covenant with one another? Did mission mean to restore the “ancient order of things” with congregational autonomy prioritized, or was mission more about working together, with the unity of the body of Christ as a whole prioritized?

Alexander Campbell emerged from his schooling at the University of Glasgow firmly committed that congregations should be radically independent, with no structure or set associations beyond them to which they were responsible or accountable in covenant. By the 1840s, however, he was one of the first in the movement to call for a new look at such

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D. Duane Cummins, in A Handbook for Today’s Disciples in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1981), reflects the underlying struggle between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom when he refers to the movement’s “ageless polarities” of “freedom and community,” “unity and diversity,” “congregationalism and catholicity” (15). In his treatment of the “Search for Unity” (38-39), Cummins states that “The ardent impulse for Christian unity has been in the bloodline of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through eighteen decades of its lineage.” But yet “the intense passion for unity often came into conflict with the more intense passion for freedom and equality, a conflict which has repeatedly blunted unity initiatives.” Cummins illustrates the pervasiveness (and destructiveness) of this struggle as he traces the history of the CC(DoC) from 1804 to “maturity” (1981).
organizational structure, having come to believe that this kind of cooperation was in fact necessary for the very mission of the church.\textsuperscript{2}

Campbell asserted:

1. We can do comparatively but little in distributing the Bible abroad without cooperation.
2. We can do comparatively but little in the great missionary field of the world either at home or abroad without cooperation.
3. We can do little or nothing to improve and elevate the Christian ministry without cooperation.
4. We can do little to check, restrain, and remove the flood of imposture and fraud committed upon the benevolence of the brethren by irresponsible, plausible, and deceptious persons, without cooperation.
5. We cannot concentrate the action of the tens of thousands of Israel, in any great Christian effort, but by cooperation.
6. We can have no thorough cooperation without a more ample, extensive, and thorough church organization.\textsuperscript{3}

In his work \textit{The Christian System}, Campbell states the following with regard to organization for ministry and mission:

...in order to this holy Communion and cooperation of churches, it is indispensable that they have an intimate and approving knowledge of one another, which can only be had and enjoyed in the form of districts. Thus the “congregations in Judea” intimately knew one another, and cooperated....These districts are a part of the \textit{circumstances} as well as the \textit{manner} of maintaining correspondence and cooperation among them, and the occasions and incidents requiring concert and conjoint action.\textsuperscript{4}

By the end of the 1840s, he was calling for a national meeting, a delegate assembly, in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was a good idea, but Campbell’s idea did not come to fruition. Instead, the meeting turned into a convention, and the convention took the form of a “society,” an association which looked more like a voluntary club to be joined rather than a functional structure.

Over forty years later, Louisville’s 1889 gathering saw another attempt at forming a delegate assembly structure. Unfortunately, the “Louisville Plan” failed, and the society concept was

\textsuperscript{2} Dunnavant, \textit{Restructure}, 112-13. See also D. Duane Cummins, \textit{Kenneth L. Teegarden: The Man, the Church, the Time} (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2007), 99.
\textsuperscript{3} Lester G. McAllister, ed., \textit{An Alexander Campbell Reader} (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1988), 87.
retained. This attempt at forming a delegate assembly structure was much lauded in some areas such as Missouri. In the words of George L. Peters, historian of Missouri Disciples:

The Louisville Plan was hailed as an advance toward brotherhood cooperation in missionary and benevolent work. It contemplated that each state should be divided into suitable districts by the state board; the “messengers” from the churches in each district would elect a district board and a secretary; the secretary was then to visit all of the churches in his district and in cooperation with the church officers, induce them to send to the district treasurer money for the support of missions.\(^5\)

In 1909 at the national meeting, another attempt was made with the appointment of a Committee on Reconstruction and Unification, which was charged with developing a plan for a delegate assembly. This too failed. Ten years later an attempt was made to propose a constitution for the United Christian Missionary Society. The goal was the creation of an interrelated structure which would connect existing agencies and boards in order to achieve more coordinated, effective ministry. This was not successful either. Should church be predominantly independent (autonomy/freedom)? or cooperative (covenant/unity)? How was one to interpret Scripture? Should only the immersed be admitted to the Table and/or membership? These tensions grew until by the end of the 1920s division in the movement popularly called the “Cooperative/Independent schism” occurred.\(^6\)

In 1917 a two-part structure was created within the cooperative stream, which included the International Convention as the main body and a Committee of Recommendations (a delegate body) as the place where business items were sent before coming to the main body, which held final authority. In 1923, when agency conflicts and overstepping boundaries into each other’s “territory” had created a confusing overlap of agencies, the Commission on Budgets and Promotional Relationships was organized. Their work culminated in the creation of Unified

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\(^5\) George L. Peters, _The Disciples of Christ in Missouri: Celebrating One Hundred Years of Co-operative Work_ (Missouri: Missouri Convention, Disciples of Christ, 1937), 47.

\(^6\) Dunnivant, _Restructure_, 184.
Promotion in 1934, which set fund-raising boundaries and common practices for Disciples agencies. The San Francisco Convention in 1948 initiated the process that eventually resulted in Restructure when it called for a study of how the church and its various agencies could fulfill its mission in the most effective manner. The Council of Agencies was then formed. Two leaders during this time of discernment were Harlie Smith and W. M. Wickizer. It was Wickizer’s restructure proposals to the Council of Agencies in 1958 which launched the drive toward the Restructure process.

W. B. Blakemore, who would become one of the developers of the Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), defined five differing concepts of congregational polity which existed within the Disciples tradition. First was strictly congregational; that is, there should be absolutely no structure beyond or besides the local congregation, including “associations.” The second concept Blakemore identified was similar to the first, except that associations, organized as private corporations (such as the Disciples of Christ Historical Society) were permissible. The third he identified went a bit farther toward cooperation but ensured that any “association” was to be under the control of local congregation(s). Those who belong in this category struggle on the line between societies/associations composed of individuals and those composed of congregations. Blakemore identified this third concept as the most widely spread among congregations at his time in history (c. 1963). The fourth concept in practice was one in which the “associations” of congregations were deemed to be like congregations in that they had their own authority. The fifth concept Blakemore identified, that in which these “associations” were to also be considered “church,” is the “one he urged the

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church to consider. This is the foundational concept that informed the Disciples’ creation of one church in three manifestations.  

As the movement toward Restructure gained momentum, there were three primary schools of thought and opinion other than that advocating the version of Restructure which emerged in 1968. One group, led by Charles Bayer, was called Disciples for Mission and Renewal. Basically, this group believed that Restructure was trying to solve the wrong problem. This group believed that the church should be addressing the loss of a sense of mission, rather than simply trying to form a structure like other denominations. It wasn’t that this group truly opposed Restructure, they simply didn’t think it went far enough. Restructure addressed the surface; this group wanted to address the heart of the church.

Another group called itself the Committee for the Preservation of the Brotherhood and was led by James DeForest Murch. This was the radically independent viewpoint, one that feared and distrusted any structural organization beyond the local congregation. They brought strident opposition to anything which leaned toward ecumenical efforts, published and widely disseminated several publications which were highly critical of the move toward Restructure, and ultimately planted seeds of suspicion which would later cause many congregations to withdraw from association with Disciples.

A third group, led by Robert Burns and Robert Shaw, was named the Atlanta Declaration Committee. This group included many with strong cooperative leanings (and practice), who felt that Restructure should address only agencies and should leave other structures of a

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10 Ibid.
congregational-cooperative nature alone. Anthony Dunnavant calls theirs a “spiritualized restoration plea.”

A. Dale Fiers served as executive secretary of the International Convention of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), president of the United Christian Missionary Society, and administrative secretary of the Commission on Restructure, and led the Disciples as the first general minister and president. He named his passion as “the search for an expression of ‘church,’ not a group of societies,” and claimed that “one of the intentions of Restructure was to replace autonomy with covenant…” Speaking about working out this intention in the process of Restructure, historian D. Duane Cummins states, “Moving from autonomy to covenant and toward becoming Church was a complicated, frustrating, and long term process. Time would be required to overcome hard, deep-rooted traditions.” Cummins could say that again today, more than forty years later, and it would be just as true now as it was then.

What guided the Commission of Brotherhood Restructure as they sought to renew, revitalize, and organize the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) around the four guideposts of restoration, unity, freedom/liberty, and mission?

Ronald Osborn, one of the architects of Restructure, set forth these guiding principles for the Commission’s work:

1. The Brotherhood seeks structures rooted in Christ’s ministry made known through Scripture.
2. The Brotherhood seeks structures that are comprehensive in ministry and mission.
3. The Brotherhood seeks structures by which congregations may fulfill their ministries.
4. The Brotherhood seeks structures that are responsibly interrelated.
5. The Brotherhood seeks structures that manifest both unity and diversity.
6. The Brotherhood seeks to be ecumenical.

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11 Ibid.
12 Dunnavant, Restructure, 224.
13 Cummins, Dale Fiers, 135.
14 Ibid., 160.
15 Ibid., 161.
7. The Brotherhood seeks structures faithful in stewardship.¹⁶

By the time of the third full meeting of the Commission on Brotherhood Restructure in 1964, four basic guidelines were agreed upon:

1. The structure will be designed so that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in all its manifestations at all levels reflects its oneness and the unity of the church.
2. The Christian Church will follow the principles of representative government through the structure of delegating bodies.
3. The Christian Church in its national manifestation will have representation from local congregations and from regions (states or areas).
4. The Christian Church will express its unity of purpose and mission through the adoption of declarations which express a covenantal relationship in the various manifestations of the church and in all its separate parts.¹⁷

Richard L. Hamm, in writing about the process and achievement of Restructure, names its foundation as covenant. He states that this is “a three-way covenant that unites God, the individual Christian, and other Christians…not by a contract that emphasizes rights, but by a covenant that emphasizes responsibilities…. A covenantal way of life, rooted in God’s covenant-making actions in Jesus Christ, calls for interdependence, synergy, and the sharing of resources. It also calls for mutual accountability to one another before God.”¹⁸

One can hear the primacy of a “unity plea” over the “restoration plea” in these guidelines and in its very definition of restructure. It is no wonder then that pastor and theologian Colbert S. Cartwright claims, “The jubilation in adopting the new Design did not stem from a new plan of organization, however improved. Rather, it arose from a clear renunciation of sectarianism once and for all. Henceforth we were to be an inclusive people.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Hamm, “Restructure,” 646.
It is also no wonder that those who believed firmly that the restoration ideal (rather than adopting ecumenically friendly structures and theology) would bring about unity of the church felt excluded and disenfranchised by the Restructure movement. Many, following the lead of those such as James DeForest Murch’s Committee for the Preservation of the Brotherhood, left the Disciples altogether, preferring to remain as independent Christian churches. They identified themselves as unaffiliated congregations, thus demonstrating their prioritization of autonomy/freedom over covenant/unity. Still others remained within the Disciples as Restructure was planned and affirmed. This diversity of opinion (and subsequent practice) regarding the placement of priorities among the Stone-Campbell ideals of restoration, unity, freedom/liberty, and mission accounts for the style and degree of adherence to the guidance of The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the resulting document governing the life of the church in its three manifestations: congregational, regional, and general church.

Even before churches were creating cooperative general ministries, there were similar efforts by state and geographical societies to officially organize for more effective mission and ministry. Missouri, one of the earliest to organize in this way, held its first representative meeting in 1837 and its first state meeting in 1841. Alexander Campbell was guest speaker at the state meeting of 1845. Other states organizing and holding statewide assemblies included Kentucky, Virginia, and Illinois. Texas Disciples established their first “co-operations” in 1850 (East Texas) and 1853 (West Texas and San Antonio), appointing their first state secretary, A. J. Bush, in

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20 See Dunnavant, “The Statement of the Ideals of the Campbell-Stone Movement by the Four Founders,” in Restructure, 9-29. In concluding this book, Dunnavant states (252) that “one of the challenges that remains for this Disciples polity is to avoid further disintegration as diverse Disciples attempt to be faithful within it.”


22 Mark G. Toulouse, Joined in Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity (St. Louis: Chalice, 1997), 223.

23 Colby D. Hall, Texas Disciples (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1953), 19.
The first “state meeting” was held in 1879, and the first Texas Christian Missionary Convention was held in 1888 in Dallas, having been organized at the “state meeting” in Austin in 1886. The first state convention in Wyoming occurred in 1923 in Casper.

As we ponder the variation in regional ministry contexts and the role and functions of regional ministers today, the underlying tension between the ideals of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom greatly affects and in many ways hinders the expression of the ideals of restoration/apolosticity and mission. No matter the ministry context, each congregation’s and region’s prioritization of covenant/unity in relation to autonomy/freedom has a direct effect on its effectiveness in ministry.

W. B. Blakemore tells of efforts in 1870 to increase missionary work in Illinois, which brought objections based on the risk of such joint cooperative ventures resulting in abuses of power. Blakemore quotes an unnamed proponent of such organization saying, “Are we to be so afraid of abuse of power that we fail to lay hold upon it?” The struggle, and this perceptive comment, are just as true today as they were in 1870.

How did Restructure affect life and ministry in the regional manifestation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? What does the Design say about regions? What does it not say? It is to these questions, and to a more intentional focus on the regional manifestation of church, that we now turn.

Section 2. Restructure: Leadership in Associations and Regions

It was September 28, 1968, and the place to be was the Kansas City Municipal Auditorium. The theme of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) was “We
Rejoice in God.” In the auditorium that day were those who celebrated the possibility of becoming a denomination, of being able to call themselves “church” after that day, and of finally gaining an adequate vehicle to carry the gospel to the world and to relate with other Christian denominations and traditions. Also present were those who felt that the whole journey of “Restructure” had been a massive waste of time, energy, and resources—a huge diversion from the true mission of the church. Some in attendance that day even felt the presence of evil in the possibility of Disciples becoming a denomination and thus embodying yet another human-made division in the body of Christ.

Ronald Osborn looked out on the assembly that day and asked for the vote. Those in favor rose in great numbers. Those opposed rose next and were a far fewer number. Both groups were thanked for their presence and votes. With this momentous vote, the Provisional Design became The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). As the assembly, at the invitation of Dr. Osborn, broke out singing the doxology, what was in the minds of those present whose ministry lay in the regional manifestation of the Disciples? Some would probably have felt uncomfortable with the fact that the section of the Design dealing with the life and ministry of regions was the least-developed part of this new guiding document. Others might have already “scoped it out,” breathing sighs of relief at that same lack of development and clear direction.

Regions are thus directed to establish, receive, and nurture congregations and to extend the ministry of Christ in witness, mission, and service, as well as establish regional structures using any of the following boundaries as guides: geographic, sociological, cultural, or political—

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28 International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), We Rejoice in God: Kansas City Assembly, September 27–October 2, 1968, cover.
30 D. Duane Cummins, The Disciples: A Struggle for Reformation (St. Louis: Chalice, 2009), 217.
31 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The Design, 20.
which sounds wonderful, but gives little concrete direction. For the Restructure process to move forward into reality, two-thirds of area and state associations were required to vote approval. Even though one hundred percent of them voted to participate in Restructure, the next few years would see a good bit of struggle and uncertainty as they navigated their way through these new waters of ministry.

One of the responsibilities given to regional ministry is that of certifying the standing of ministers. Regions are specifically assigned the task of authorizing ordination of those serving in their respective regions and are charged to “help congregations by supervising the act of ordination.”\(^{32}\) While the Design gave the General Assembly the responsibility of setting the policies and criteria for the order of ministry, it did not include any specifics, instead leaving administration of said policies and criteria, as well as the task of determining who fits that criteria, to individual regions. This has resulted in a wide variance of criteria in use, especially regarding the office of licensed ministry.

Kenneth Teegarden agreed that, from the beginning of Restructure discussion and planning through its approval and implementation, “The regional manifestation was spelled out as completely as was possible. It was left as an unfinished task.”\(^{33}\) So it is still today; many who prioritize covenant/unity hunger for a more explicit description of regional ministry which more firmly connects it with the general and congregational expressions of the CC(DoC). However, there are others, speaking more from an autonomy/freedom priority who think regions should in fact be even more free to define themselves than the description coming out of Restructure suggests. Different regions of the church have different histories and different cultural and

\(^{32}\) Friedly and Cummins, *Search for Identity*, 105.

\(^{33}\) Cummins, *The Disciples*, 221.
theological constituencies. Teegarden commented on this dilemma, stating that, “You cannot have the same kind of regional expression in the Southwest as in the region of Utah.”

The roots of autonomy and fear of structural authority (hierarchy) led to many failures to teach and promote covenant over autonomy and unity as a higher priority than liberty/freedom. The same initial unease with owning and living into Restructure which kept the three manifestations of church from coming together as one body is still apparent in many ways today. D. Duane Cummins stated that, “Both Kenneth Teegarden and Dale Fiers wanted desperately to redefine and strengthen the role of regions. Neither has envisioned regions clinging so tightly to their autonomy, boundaries, and size of staff.” Again, much of the failure of the whole church in all manifestations to claim and live into covenant over autonomy can be traced to the fact that, in practice, liberty/freedom overtakes unity in our common life as church.

Even though, in spirit, regional ministers “have the authority which the totality of churches in the regions…have assigned to them” and can “exercise considerable authority through the role they play in ministerial location and relocation,” in reality the “autonomy plea” is considered more powerful than the “unity plea.” Congregations ignore regional ministry (many times unless they are desperate for help and all other avenues have been exhausted). They withhold funds in protest when they do not agree with some opinion or action of the region or regional minister. To be fair, sometimes regions patently ignore (or do not consult in the first place) congregations before issuing what many term “we believe” statements and/or making financial decisions allocating funds and resources.

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 222.
As William Blakemore stated so well, “We need to understand theologically what denominations are, what councils and federations are, and how ecclesiastical organization and polity are to be understood.” Speaking more than twenty years after Blakemore, and nineteen years after Restructure became official, Dennis Landon pointed out that this conflict between autonomy and whole-church covenantal practice did in fact become more entrenched, stating that, “We remain Congregationalists in matters of polity, and our own history illuminates the inherent conflict between organization (which is the institutionalization of authority) and the principle of congregational autonomy (which is an organizational projection of individualism). To create an organization is to establish channels of power, lines of authority, and conventions of leadership. Without these, there is, in fact, no organization.”

Landon went on to add,

In spite of organizations established, covenants made, and structures developed, this congregationalism has held sway even after the creation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and it remains the starting point for all discussions of Disciples polity. We believe that the church is one and we want our church to be one, but we mistrust those who might hold authority, claim influence, or exercise power within that corporate body…. This ambivalence about the necessities of institutional life permeates our history.

As the history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has unfolded, the number and configuration of regions (formerly state/regional/provincial societies/associations) have changed, as the following table illustrates.

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39 Ibid., 35.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>State and Provincial Missionary Societies</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>State Societies (and “All-Canada”)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>State/Regional/Provincial Societies</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>State Missionary Societies/Associations</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>State and Area Regions/Associations/Societies</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Regions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Regions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Regions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Regions</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the number and size of regions has changed—from 39 at the time of Restructure, to 35 in 1982, to our present 33, the autonomy/freedom vs. covenant/unity struggle continues. How will the covenantal nature of church as three manifestations in one be effectively embodied? How are congregations, regions, and general church to be interdependent and complementary parts of one body? As the statement Disciples believe and practice, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity” is considered, how is what is essential and what is not decided? There are many differing opinions. Many times the third option, “in all things, charity,” is forgotten. When covenant unity/relationship is prioritized over liberty/freedom (autonomy), the church claims by its actions that the one essential is indeed that “Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, and is our Lord and Savior.” The truth is that “no manifestation of the Church can be Church without the other two.”

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40 Information from years 1940 through 1954 is from William Blake Miller, Jr., *Vision with Passion: A Church History of the Disciples of Christ and their Leaders at the Middle Judicatory Level from 1890 to 1969* (Indianapolis: College of Regional Ministers, 2004). Information for years 1969 through 2010 is from Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) yearbooks. Also of interest are changes in names and configuration of middle judicatory ministries. See appendices 4 through 8 for a more detailed listing of regions for years 1969 through 2010.

The Commission on Theology, in its “A Word to the Church on Ministry” (1985), identified regional ministry as the place in the church where the ministry of oversight (episcopo) should be expressed the most clearly. The commission further stated that more attention to the clarity and definition of that ministry was needed. In response to this need, they identified these elements which should define this ministry of oversight: serving as a personal representative of the given unity of the church in all places and ages; proclaiming and teaching the apostolic faith while helping the church understand changing times and circumstances; having a regular and frequent presence in each congregation in the region as preacher, teacher, and celebrant at Communion, as well as serving as pastor to pastors; and overseeing the ordination of candidates for the order of ministry.\(^{42}\)

These are wonderful suggestions; however, putting them into effective practice once again runs into the reality of our autonomy/freedom vs. covenant/unity struggle. Even though some of our regional structures may look the same today, this struggle regarding proper granting and use (and fear of possible abuse) of power is just as prevalent today. For example, although the Southwest, Mid-America, and Central Rocky Mountain Regions all are divided into areas or districts, much of the similarity ends there.

In the Central Rocky Mountain Region, districts are somewhat geographically determined, loosely organized clusters of congregations. Each has an elected president who is an active layperson or clergy volunteer. The responsibility of this president is to sit on the regional board. Anything beyond that (arranging gatherings, etc.) is the district president’s choice.

In the Mid-America Region, area ministers are full time, paid clergy. They are responsible for pastoral care of persons, pastors, and congregations in their area and coordinate and consult in

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 118.
the search and call process for congregations seeking pastoral leadership. These area ministers serve on a Council of Areas, which functions as a regional board.

In the Southwest Region, much is the same as in Mid-America, with each area its own entity. Common purpose, unity, and fellowship are nurtured as Area Ministers gather, but areas are in no way “under” the regional minister.

Many times, a good way to determine what priorities are and structure really means is to “follow the money.” How does the struggle between covenant unity and autonomy play out with regard to funding and budgeting? In the Central Rocky Mountain Region, district ministries\(^\text{43}\) are funded through the regional budgeting process; however, in the Southwest and Mid-America regions, areas are responsible for their own fund-raising and budgeting. Thus we can easily see that the funding and budgeting structure in the Southwest and Mid-America Regions give more authority to autonomy, whereas that of the Central Rocky Mountain Region gives more authority to covenant in and with the regional manifestation of church.

Just in this brief look at three regions, we can see varying responses to the fear of use—and abuse—of power at play in our middle judicatory polity-in-practice today. In the Central Rocky Mountain Region, there is virtually no structural district ministry, with the exception of district representation on the regional board. In Mid-America, the region maintains a good deal of financial and ministry oversight of its districts. The areas of the Southwest Region, however, are a different matter. There has been much conversation centered on the fact that these areas are really regions unto themselves, with their own fund-raising, budgeting, and ministry oversight. It is only in the area of ministerial standing and pastoral search and call that the region exercises oversight, and even then, there are more than a few Southwest Region congregations which

\(^{43}\) Some regions are further divided into areas or districts. In larger regions such as the Southwest Region (Texas and New Mexico), areas are divided into geographic “clusters.”
simply step outside this process to call new pastoral leadership without consulting the region at all.

As these regions, and many others, seek to renew, revitalize, and perhaps restructure their ministries for the future, we would do well to hear again what A. Dale Fiers said as he became our first general minister and president: “Let us be clear what that heritage is and what it is not. It is not uncritical acceptance of the results of the study and work of our pioneers as something final and fixed….it is no mark of honor to them if we cling to viewpoints and understandings which are not Scriptural and theologically valid in the new light which breaks forth from God’s word in our day.”

Richard L. Hamm, who served as general minister and president from 1993 to 2003, quickly became frustrated with the current church structure’s ministry and resource duplication. His frustration stemmed more from the way people and entities in the church struggled and squabbled over structure than in the structure itself. Hamm believed that “the new structure did not provide for the kind of accountability that might have made the new organization an effective expression of the envisioned body.”

Given the fact that one of the purposes was to unite the church in covenant, to replace autonomy with covenant, we have discovered that there is no immediate “quick fix”. It is a complicated, sometimes frustrating, long-term process, but it defines a goal which we as church should continually be moving toward. In the words of Phil 3:12-16 (NRSV),

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ.

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44 Cummins, Dale Fiers, 137.
45 Richard L. Hamm, former general minister and president, CC(DOC), telephone interview by the author, May 2010.
Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

If, as D. Duane Cummins tells us, “History offers us a way of coming to terms with an anxious present and an unpredictable future,” how will we go about discerning a future for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which opens the horizons of hope as the body of Christ on earth, embodies covenant over autonomy and fear of authority, and moves forward as a church convicted of its past divisiveness and committed to future wholeness? Are we listening to the call of Sharon Watkins, our current general minister and president, as she passionately envisions Disciples as “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world”?46

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46 Cummins, Dale Fiers, 270?
Chapter Two
Regional Ministry Today: The Struggle for Identity Continues

Section 1. Autonomy and Unity in the Regional Ministry Context

The struggle between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom is at least as old as the church itself. In Scripture, we repeatedly see the apostle Paul struggle with the diverse contexts, voices, and pressing issues of the earliest congregations of Christ-followers as he addresses letters to them, urging them to demonstrate oneness in the body of Christ as they live and share the Good News.¹

Theologian and systems thinker Paul Steinke describes the tension between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom in the body of Christ as two equal dangers/threats in the relationship system: the “distancing threat,” defined as insisting on having one’s own way (extreme autonomy/freedom); and the “dissolving threat,” defined as fusing with another and forcing the other to be like oneself (extreme covenant/unity). In discussing this tension, he states, “There must always be a certain space between people so there can be dialogue, exchange, alongsidedness, and engagement.”² Paul’s mission to gather financial support for the struggling Jerusalem church as he travels to other congregations is a demonstration of his work to put the covenant/unity of the church as a whole into action.³

¹ We see this covenant/unity described and urged clearly in 1 Cor 1:10-17 and further in 1 Cor 12. Paul Minear treats this passage thoroughly in his Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 190-91, describing and addressing this struggle well: “In Paul’s mind the issue resolved itself into a matter of understanding the full correlation between the oneness of the Holy Spirit, as the source of all gifts, and the oneness of the church, as the area where the gifts were apportioned individually…. No form of spiritual expression could be authentic which did not serve all and which was not empowered by all…. Therefore in every spiritual gift there must be oneness in source and goal, a oneness that was itself manifested by the variety in the gifts themselves.” He concludes, “Unity was not uniformity; it was neither the source of uniformity nor served by it. ‘There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.’ This constitutes the basic axiom of the whole argument.”
² Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 89-90.
³ Participation in the “Jerusalem offering” is promoted in 1 Cor 16:1-3, Acts 11:25-30, and Rom 15:25-29. In this mission, Paul is also demonstrating his statement in 1 Cor 12:26 that “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.”
Steinke describes three components of his systems approach to congregations, which can also be applied to the middle judicatory ministry in CC(DoC) regions: “interactions that take place, information that is exchanged, and influence that is reciprocally reinforced.” In the “system” of the early church network, there were interactions between congregations and between congregations and the apostle Paul as he founded, advised, and gave oversight to them. Information was exchanged both among congregations and between congregations and Paul, and influence among and between congregations is apparent as well.

In many ways, congregations today find themselves in similar circumstances. Separated by distance and cultural and contextual differences and tested in times of scarce resources, we are challenged to celebrate our uniqueness and yet work together in unity to spread the Good News of Christ in a world in which faith (of any kind) seems increasingly marginalized. We must honor and respect our differences while we act as the body of Christ on earth in unity, covenanthing together as David L. Bartlett states, “Not to consolidate, but to preach, teach, evangelize, and act with new passion and excitement.” As Robert J. Banks reflects on life and focus in the early church, he expresses well the need for demonstrating covenant/unity which recognizes the gifts of diversity: “Paul’s thinking does not begin with the differences that divide people from one another but with the differences that divide all people from God.”

Regional ministers in the CC(DoC) face the age-old challenge of leading the church to demonstrate the transformational power of diverse congregations serving together to spread the Good News of Christ in the world. Regions are much as Paul Steinke describes congregations;

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4 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 5.
5 Steinke describes his systems approach this way: “Systems thinking is basically a way of thinking about life as all of a piece. It is a way of thinking about how the whole is arranged, how its parts interact, and how the relationships between the parts produce something new…. You cannot isolate anything and understand it. The parts function as they do because of the presence of the other parts” (Healthy Congregations, 5).
they are “networks of connection and contact” in which “wholeness is not to be confused with oneness.” His principles are easily applicable to regional ministry in the CC(DoC). In dealing with the age-old tension between autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity, Steinke advises, “Differences are not to be eliminated; rather, they become alive. The different parts interact and cooperate. Wholeness involves various parts coming together and interacting.”

This project surveyed those serving in regional ministry in the CC(DoC). Responses were received from twenty three of the thirty-three regions. This survey asked respondents to prioritize the six recommended ministry criteria for those in regional ministry as taken from the Welcome to Regional Ministry: An Orientation Manual for New Regional Ministers according to how much time, attention, and prayer was spent addressing each area of ministry. Respondents were then asked to prioritize the same criteria according to “what you feel should prioritize your time, attention, and prayer.” The differences between these two sets of responses were striking in their reflection of the struggle to balance the core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom in leading diverse congregations to serve effectively together as church.

As I analyzed the systems approach’s components of interactions, information exchange, and influence, it soon became apparent that this tension between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom was a powerful, defining factor in all three components of the “system” of regional ministry. These two seemingly opposing core values can be constructively addressed using a “polarity model.” According to Roy M. Oswald and Barry Johnson, if the following questions can be answered in the affirmative when considering the possible “poles” of

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8 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 6.
9 See appendix 1.
10 Responses from regional ministers and associate/area ministers (who assist or lead portions of regions) were summarized separately.
autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity, then this struggle qualifies as a “polarity to manage” rather than a “problem to solve.”\textsuperscript{11}

First, “Is the issue ongoing? Is it likely this tension/struggle will still be an issue years from now?” Oswald and Johnson describe polarities as unavoidable and unsolvable; in other words, likely to be a part of regional ministry throughout its life. The struggle between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom is both historic and ongoing in the regional expression of the CC(DoC).

Second, “Are the two alternatives interdependent? That is, can you focus on one for only so long before you are required to focus on the other to be successful over time?”\textsuperscript{12} The struggle between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom has been demonstrated to be interdependent, both historically and currently in the regional expression of the CC(DoC).

Oswald and Johnson state that if our answers to these two questions are affirmative, then we can effectively apply the polarity model as we seek to constructively manage the tension between the “poles” of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom in the life of CC(DoC) regional ministry. It is important to remember as we seek to effectively and constructively manage these “polarities” that both covenant/unity (common ministry and voice) and autonomy/freedom (uniqueness and diversity) are gifts from God. Thus, either/or thinking (that we must choose one “side” over the other) will not be constructive (or successful). In order to manage this polarity effectively, we will be well served to utilize a more both/and attitude, drawing from the positive outcomes from both covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom frames of thinking and practice while avoiding over-emphasizing either “pole.”\textsuperscript{13}

As we apply the polarity model to this intrinsic struggle in the life of the church, we engage a valuable resource which can help regions move toward stronger, growing, and more effective

\begin{small}
\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11} Oswald and Johnson, \textit{Managing Polarities}, 231.
\bibitem{12} Ibid.
\bibitem{13} Ibid., 239.
\end{thebibliography}
\end{small}
ministry in the unique and ever-changing contexts in which they find themselves. Peter Steinke informs us that information is to be used in two healthy ways. First, information is used to keep the system in balance, ensuring stability. Second, information is used to amplify, initiating a disturbance which in turn can create change in the system. He states that information flows freely in healthy congregations (regions).¹⁴ Steinke has this to say about how the systemic “influence” factor can be used in healthy ways:

1. A congregation (region) influences its own health. By taking responsible action, it shapes its destiny.
2. A congregation (region) must manage whatever it can shape and not be overwhelmed by what it cannot.
3. A healthy congregation (region) is one that actively and responsibly addresses or heals its disturbances, not one with an absence of troubles.¹⁵

Steinke also reminds us that complete wholeness is not achievable in this imperfect world, yet “every congregation (region) can promote its well-being.”¹⁶

I have analyzed the regional ministry survey responses using Osborne and Johnson’s polarity model. From these responses, I have constructed a “polarity map,” which can serve as an instrument to gauge the effectiveness of regional ministry in the light of how well the polarities of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom are being managed across the life and ministry of the regional expression of the CC(DoC).¹⁷

Looking at our polarity map, note that the two “poles” specified are “Covenant/Unity of Congregations” and “Autonomy/Freedom of Congregations” within regions. The goal is to

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¹⁵ Ibid., 13.
¹⁶ Ibid., 16-17.
¹⁷ Peter Steinke notes (*Healthy Congregations*, 43) that “All congregations (regions) are working with a small set of core issues: (1) mission and how to achieve it; (2) strengths/resources and how to implement them; (3) anxiety and how to manage it; and (4) wholeness and how to maintain it.” Considering these four core issues, I have summarized and analyzed survey responses and constructed a tool which I hope will be useful to those engaged in regional ministry both to assess and improve the strength and effectiveness of their ministry as measured by their growth and sense of connectedness.
balance these two, thus engaging in less “either/or” and more “both/and” thinking and practice. The basic energy system for this polarity map is built around these two poles. Note there is a natural movement around them in the shape of an infinity loop. The “up” side of each pole is described by the values of focusing on it. The “down” side of each is described by our fears when this pole is neglected (when we overfocus on its opposite). For example, we see that a value of covenant/unity is a sense of strength in numbers and common vision (a value), but at the same time if we overfocus here we experience pastors’ feeling alone and unsupported and a loss of cohesiveness/common purpose (a fear).

There is a natural movement as the map illustrates: when one pole is overprioritized and the other pole neglected, events occur which call attention back to the values of the neglected pole. For example, when covenant/unity is overprioritized to the neglect of autonomy/freedom, we see such effects (early warnings) as decreasing attendance at regional events and congregations who are slow to respond to regional communications. When autonomy/freedom is overprioritized to the neglect of covenant/unity, effects (early warnings) such as the unique mission needs of congregations not being met and/or the uniqueness and diversity of congregations being minimized or ignored are seen.

The goal in balancing these polarities is to work to achieve and maintain a “Thriving Region.” This is the “Greater Purpose Statement” as seen at the top of the polarity map. “Deeper Fear from Lack of Balance” is the experience of a “Declining Region” as seen at the bottom of the polarity map.

Throughout time, natural movement occurs in the direction of this “infinity loop.” This tool can be effective as the church works to increase time spent in the “up side” of both poles; that is, when the importance of both covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom is recognized and
demonstrated in the ways churches and individuals interact, inform, and influence one another as they engage in regional life and ministry.

Chapter 3 will take a closer look at three regions which are experiencing new strength, growth, and connection as a result of their efforts to manage these polarities. The similar actions these case study regions are taking which describe how they are gaining or maintaining the positive results from focusing on each “pole” are reflected in the sections of the polarity map titled, “Action Steps.” The polarity map sections titled, “Early Warning Signs” describe measurable indicators which survey respondents and those in case study regions have noted as effective indicators which let them know they are moving toward negative results from under-focusing on one “pole” to the detriment of the other.

Of note are the differences in current and optimal ministry priorities between the entire group and the three case study regions. Responses from the group as a whole (both current and optimal) favored the two ministry role/function groups which address the individuality of congregations, namely pastoral oversight (ministry priority group #3) and administrative and fiduciary oversight (ministry priority group #5). When ranking their top three current ministry priority groups, twenty-six out of forty-five regional minister responses and seventeen out of thirty-five associate regional minister responses named one of these autonomy/freedom-leaning role/function groups. When ranking their top three optimal ministry priority groups, eighteen out of forty-two regional minister responses and fourteen out of thirty-three associate regional minister responses also named one of these autonomy/freedom-leaning role/function groups.

When ranking their lowest current ministry priority group, none of the fifteen regional minister responses and none of the eleven associate regional minister responses named one of these autonomy/freedom-leaning role/function groups. When ranking their top three optimal
ministry priority groups, two of the fifteen regional minister responses and two of eleven associate regional minister responses also named one of these autonomy/freedom-leaning role/function groups.

While the overall differences between responses related to current and optimal ministry roles/functions reflect a yearning for ministry priorities which are more balanced between the covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom poles, responses and follow-up interviews with regional ministers serving our three case study regions reflect this difference even more clearly.

As we will see in chapter 3, these regions are taking action as they seek more balance between those congregations and ministry constituencies who prioritize covenant/unity and those who prioritize autonomy/freedom. In doing so, they are beginning to reap the benefits of increased ministry effectiveness as defined by: (1) an increase in congregations and individuals working together toward common ministry goals (connection); (2) increased resiliency in recovery from financial setbacks, contextual changes, and unexpected events (strength); and (3), an increase in the number of people and congregations involved in ministry endeavors, both individually and in coordination with one another (growth).

Section 2. What Does the CC(DoC) Expect from Regional Ministers Today?

Peter Steinke identifies the following four core issues with which congregations are working: (1) mission and how to achieve it; (2) strengths/resources and how to implement them; (3) anxiety and how to manage it; and (4) wholeness and how to maintain it. These issues are applicable to regions as well. The approaches which regional ministry takes to manage these four core ministry issues are in many ways driven and affected by the historic and continuing struggle between the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. The way in which

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18 Ibid.
those in regional ministry manage this polarity has a powerful impact on the effectiveness of regional ministry as seen in its connection, strength, and growth.

In addition to ranking the six groups of ministry priorities according to the amounts of time, attention, and prayer devoted to each, survey respondents were also asked the following two questions: (1) What “gets in the way” of regional ministry being all it should be in your ministry context and culture? and (2) If you could change one thing about regional ministry, what would it be?

Many of the responses clearly indicate the underlying tension between the ideals of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom, as well as the need to constructively and effectively manage this tension (polarity) in order to maximize connection, strength, and growth in regional ministry. As stated above, regional ministry sits at the junction between the congregational and general expressions of the CC(DoC). In order for the CC(DoC) to thrive and grow, regional ministry must maintain a strong, vibrant, and connectional ministry—both in joining unique and diverse congregations in common ministry and in joining with other unique and diverse regions as the general expression of the CC(DoC).

As a whole, responses to these two questions reflect the “downward spiral” of the polarity model, in which churches and individuals get stuck in the negative (fears) and responses are increasingly reactive rather than proactive. In other words, when bothered by a tendency toward covenant/unity, churches and individuals overcorrect by becoming strident in their move toward autonomy/freedom, reacting as if covenant/unity were an enemy instead of an alternative pole of
being to be balanced in order to achieve and maintain strong and effective ministry, and vice-versa.\textsuperscript{19}

Responses to the question of “What gets in the way…?” illustrate this downward spiral. A few respondents feel they are expected to be all things to all people (overfocus on the covenant/unity pole). Some responses indicative of this include:

“…far too many expectations and too little staff to do the work.”
“…inordinate amount of time given to administrative details.”
“…has become increasingly challenging to do much proactive planning/work/visioning due to the number of church conflicts and clergy misconduct cases.”
“…a confusion of roles, and confusion of responsibilities, and tacit understandings confuse these roles and responsibilities.”
“Lack of time to meet every need…”
“Regional ministry is like a train of work that never stops.”
“…vested a lot of expectations in the office without vesting any authority outside of personal authority gained from relationships. Without a formal model of authority, we are constantly having to negotiate issues rather than dealing directly with them.”

Many others feel they are treated as irrelevant and unneeded (overfocus on the autonomy/freedom pole). Some of the responses indicative of this include:

“People in ‘silos’ seeing only their congregation or area of ministry as if it is disconnected from other ministries.”
“I think it’s the wider church’s culture of general regard for Regional Church as an expensive optional middle judicatory bureaucracy, rather than a visible expression of the Church as reign of God in the world, in the same way that local and general expressions are more readily regarded.”
“Disinterest and even antipathy toward the Region and the denomination by so many churches…”
“The real situation is that most people in local congregations have little or no idea what the larger church does, except for collecting special offerings.”
“The general church does its own thing, the region does its own thing, and the local congregations do their own thing.”
“Lack of understanding of COVENANT RELATIONSHIP and lack of commitment to it.”
“Tendency toward independence in many congregations, with little regard for mutual support and cooperation.”
“…is the provincial understanding many Christians have of the Church—i.e., their inability or unwillingness to comprehend that the Church [capital ‘C’] is more than their local

\textsuperscript{19} Though reflections of the uniqueness and diversity of regional ministry contexts and cultures can be seen in survey results, the overall tendency is strongly toward increasingly reactionary responses to the current overfocus on the autonomy/freedom pole (ideal) at the expense of the covenant/unity pole (ideal).
Thus too much time and effort is spent protecting their facilities and/or their organizational structure and far too little time/energy/resources is given to true ministry in the name of Jesus the Christ.”

Responses to the question “If you could change one thing about regional ministry, what would it be?” illustrate both a majority view of current overfocus on the autonomy/freedom pole and a yearning for an increased (and thus overall balanced) focus on covenant/unity, as illustrated by the following sampling of responses:

“We would have adequate financial resources to fund ALL the ministries we should be providing to promote ‘wholeness in a fragmented world!’ To have such a blessing ‘might’ cause congregations to look beyond their survival mentality toward true ministry.”

“I would prefer that it be more shared than it is….no region should ever have to risk better mission and ministry without the full support of the rest of the Church.”

“Connect it more directly with the GMP (General Minister & President)”

“Make one position available on a rotating basis (2 years) to help local pastors see the big picture.”

“For regional ministers to be seen by the whole church as spiritual, visionary leaders rather than middle managers.”

This slide toward overemphasis on autonomy/freedom in the overall life of the church is being addressed and attempts are being planned and implemented to rebalance these two polar ideals in several of our CC(DoC) regions, thus leading to stronger, more effective ministry. In the next chapter, three of those regions who are working toward this “new day” in regional ministry will be studied in more detail. It is hoped that their efforts will lead the way toward “wholeness in a fragmented church” in the form of useful examples and strategies for other regions who are actively seeking ways to balance covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom.
Chapter Three
Toward the Future of Regional Ministry

Section 1. From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Transformation in Progress

As regions work toward a future of healthy and effective ministry, Peter Steinke reminds them that “Health is a process, not a thing or state. It is ongoing, dynamic, and ever-changing. Health is a direction, not a destination, a once-and-for-all property.… Health is always about attitudes, moods, and choices.”¹

Throughout the history of the CC(DoC), those in middle judicatory ministry have become enmeshed in the historic struggle between the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. This has been particularly evident as regional ministers seek to transform structures and ministries in order to increase the health and effectiveness of regions as connected, strong, and growing communities of congregations.

Steinke notes that what he terms a “sense of coherence” is a major determining factor in a group’s ability to move toward and/or maintain health.² There are three interrelated parts of this “sense of coherence”: (1) meaningfulness, or the overall sense of purpose. Do congregations and individuals in the region agree with and commit to an overall purpose, and are they excited by the challenge of this common goal? (2) manageability, or the sense of control and ability to influence events. Do congregations and individuals in the region believe they can influence events and thus serve as valued parts of the region’s destiny? Do they believe resources are available to move toward a unified future vision? (3) comprehensibility, or the ability of congregations and individuals in regions to judge reality as accurately as possible. As

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¹ Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 27.
² Ibid., 31.
information is gathered, organized, and evaluated, these are valuable criteria as the region seeks to move into a connected, strong, and growing future.³

The next part of this chapter takes a closer look at three regions which are working toward and/or experiencing new health and effectiveness as demonstrated in increased connection, strength, and growth. Our focus will be on the effect new priorities in regional leadership roles and functions have as these regions seek to more effectively manage the polarities of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom in their unique contexts.

As focus shifts to these three case study regions, signs of increasing ministry effectiveness will be noted as evidenced by higher levels of connection, strength, and growth. The polarity map which I have constructed (seen in Chapter 2) is a result of this regional ministry survey, follow-up interviews, and these case studies. It will serve as a valuable reference and analysis tool. In addition, Steinke’s summary of “better functioning congregations” as applied to regions will serve as a conversation partner. He states, “Better functioning congregations are more energized. Their interactions are charged with spontaneity, intensity, and wholehearted involvement.”⁴

These three case study regions are in different stages of intentionally working toward this “new day” of increased ministry effectiveness: North Carolina, Mid-America, and Northern California-Nevada. It is hoped that their efforts will help lead the way toward “wholeness in a fragmented church” by providing useful examples and strategies for other regions which are actively seeking ways to balance covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom, resulting in increased connection, strength, and growth in ministry. In each case, historical and contextual information

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³ Ibid., 31-32.
⁴ Ibid., 34.
will be included as it is helpful in understanding transformational strategies being considered and/or implemented.

The North Carolina Region is in the initial stages of formulating a new vision for ministry in its unique context which includes the mostly Anglo Disciples congregations as well as historically Black “Assemblies” and “Piedmont District” congregations.5 “Assemblies” congregations have a separate structure which interacts with the historically Anglo CC(DoC) in both regional and general expressions of church, while “Piedmont District” congregations are more connected within the CC(DoC).

The Mid-America Region includes Missouri (with the exception of the Kansas City metropolitan area, which comprises its own region) and Illinois congregations in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Although encountering many roadblocks and necessary adjustments along the way, Mid-America is in the initial stages of moving into new ways of doing ministry as a region. Chief among structural changes being considered in their “Re-Envisioning” is the replacement of the position of Regional Minister with a “Regional Ministry Team” comprised of the four area ministers as they plan a move from a “hub and spoke” (regional minister-centered) model to a network/affinity group model of regional ministry.

The Northern California-Nevada Region is well into implementation of its new structure and prioritization of regional ministry roles and functions. Spontaneity, intensity (ministry focus), and wholehearted involvement are widespread as this region moves into their “new day” of more effective ministry together as illustrated by their increasing connection, strength, and growth.

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5 Piedmont congregations’ ecclesiology is more similar to that of Disciples, with openness to women serving in primary leadership roles and celebration of weekly Communion. Assemblies congregations tend to be more hierarchical in nature, have women in associate ministry roles serving “under” male leadership, and celebrate monthly Communion which includes a foot-washing ritual.
Section 2. A New Day: Regional Ministry in North Carolina

In the wake of the Civil War, the North Carolina Missionary Society (ancestor to the North Carolina region) charged three Anglo pastors with starting new Black churches in North Carolina. Two came from a CC(DoC) background; the third from the Free Will Baptist tradition. This effort began what are known today as the Piedmont District Convention and Assemblies congregations, the latter which have had parallel structures with historically Anglo CC(DoC) congregations for almost 150 years.

The Piedmont District Convention congregations are located in North Carolina and north-central Virginia. Their ecclesiology and liturgy is similar to that of the mostly Anglo Disciples congregations in many ways, including the celebration of weekly Communion, inclusion of women in all ministry roles, and the regular use of the CC(DoC) Affirmation of Faith in worship. On the other hand, the use of the identifier “convention” in their title, a loose connection of autonomous congregations, denotes an identity which leans toward the autonomy/freedom pole.

Assemblies congregations are organized in districts, extend beyond North Carolina, and are led by current General Bishop Alton Smith, whose home congregation is in Goldsboro, North Carolina. They are organized according to “affiliative” connections rather than geographic boundaries. All district headquarters are located in North Carolina except one, the northeast district, which is headquartered in New York. Current attempts are being made at the regional level to strengthen the connection between the Assemblies’ general bishop and the CC(DoC) General Minister and President, Dr. Sharon E. Watkins. Two-thirds of CC(DoC) congregations and all North Carolina Assemblies congregations are located in eastern North Carolina.

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6 See The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Preamble.
Both Assemblies and Piedmont congregations value traditionally Black worship styles, which include more charismatic and lively “call and response” preaching and memorized (vs. printed material referenced) singing. Both trace their beginnings back to the context of the North American slavery and emancipation experience.

The Disciples congregations, which are predominantly Anglo in composition7, are organized in eight geographical districts and include two South Carolina congregations (Greenville and Myrtle Beach) which affiliate with the North Carolina Region for historic and relational reasons.8

Though historically connected, conflicting meeting and event scheduling continues to be one of the challenges to bringing these components of the North Carolina Region together in common life and ministry. Five years ago, Valerie Melvin, an associate regional minister who was previously an Assemblies associate vice-bishop/administrator, was brought onto the regional staff to aid in strengthening this connection. In the words of Regional Minister John Richardson, she “has been very valuable to the region,” and serves as “an integral part of regional assembly planning.” Both serve as a link between the Assemblies’ general bishop and the CC(DoC) general minister and president.

Given the contextual reality of a historic racial divide in this region, a major focus of increasing connection, strength, and growth is in the area of racial healing and reconciliation. John Richardson stated that this process takes “intentionality, patience, and long-term vision.” He further stated that “It’s a journey…we’re not there yet, but we think we’re moving in the right

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7 Two new Disciples congregations have recently been formed. Both are predominantly non-Anglo: one is Philippino, the other Myanmar.
8 There was no regional minister in South Carolina when the Myrtle Beach congregation formed, and there were relational struggles with the South Carolina regional minister when the Greenville congregation formed.
direction.” When asked what the main focus of this long-range vision might be, he identified it as seeking “commonality while respecting differences.”

This move in the direction of more connectedness (covenant/unity) can be seen in both small scale—regional ministry encouraging congregation-to-congregation connections between CC(DoC) and Assemblies congregations—and larger scale efforts (such as the theme of the recent regional assembly, “That All May Be One”).

Resolution 112 was passed at this assembly, which begins a process to envision the next five to ten years in the North Carolina Region with an emphasis on continued healing and reconciliation as the region moves toward increasing connection, strength, and growth. This visioning process is expected to take two years, with a resulting proposal to be brought to the 2014 regional assembly for approval.

Also during this recent regional assembly, the slate of nominated (and approved) regional officers included Rev. Dr. William Barber of Goldsboro, a well known NAACP leader, as a new regional vice moderator. While assembly discussion was spirited, the tone was positive, epitomizing John Richardson’s aim of “commonality while respecting differences.”

He is working to lead the region into a healthy and effective future, both in his encouragement and resourcing “grassroots” connections between congregations of Assemblies, Piedmont, and Disciples traditions and his regional leadership of healing and reconciliation ministries. As evidence of the focus and tone of regional assemblies and the official start of the future visioning process, Richardson noted several examples of the covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom

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9 Telephone interview by the author, June 13, 2012.
10 Held in Wilmington, NC, April 16–18, 2010, the assembly was titled, “One Dream, One Church.” This move toward healing and reconciliation (and toward the covenant/unity core value), was continued and strengthened in the following regional assembly held in Raleigh, NC, April 27–29, 2012. The theme of this most recent assembly was “That All May Be One” (John 17:22), and it asked the fundamental question, “How to reignite our passion for church unity?”
polarity. First, the Hookerton District, the strongest of the eight Disciple districts, is currently studying some of Michael Kinnamon and Jan Linn’s work on covenant/unity in the church.\(^{12}\) This is leading to lively discussions about the balance in respecting and valuing parts of the body (congregations), yet functioning in covenant unity as the body of Christ together. Participants are challenged to put what they are reading into practice in their unique historical and contemporary contexts.

Further illustrating the struggle between the poles of autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity, Richardson noted, “Many congregations, pastors, and/or individuals pay lip service to covenant” and “are driven by the notion that the larger church has ulterior motives.” Further, “Many congregations prioritize financial contributions to other ministries over contributing to regional ministry.”\(^{13}\)

Though there is still much evidence of an ongoing overfocus on the polarity of autonomy/freedom, there is evidence of a new energy as congregations and affinity groups begin to connect and coalesce. There is broader diversity emerging (for example, new Philippino- and Myanmar-heritage congregations), interest in and/or attendance at district and regional activities and events is increasing, and a new sense of excitement about future ministry in the North Carolina region of the CC(DoC) is apparent. Of these three case study regions, the North Carolina region is at the earliest stage of re-visioning regional ministry for increased effectiveness.

Even in this early stage, however, increasing connection, strength, and growth are apparent. Congregations and individuals are identifying common ministry goals and formulating plans to address them. In a growing number of instances, this increase in connection is strengthening

\(^{12}\) Of special emphasis in their study together is chapter 2, “Covenant: Freedom with Accountability,” in Kinnamon and Linn’s *Disciples: Reclaiming Our Identity, Reforming Our Practice* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2009).

\(^{13}\) Telephone interview of June 13, 2012.
individuals, congregations, and the region as financial challenges, contextual changes, and unexpected events are faced and addressed in partnership with others rather than in isolation. Likewise, those in leadership are beginning to see an increase in people and congregations actively involved in ministry endeavors, drawing more participants and resources to the life and mission of the CC(DoC) in North Carolina.

Section 3. A New Day: Regional Ministry in Mid-America

Griffith Hamlin says it well on the opening page of his book on the history of the first 150 years of Disciples history in the Mid-America Region: “The past is an explanation of the present; the present, an introduction to the future.”

Cooperative ministry, the outward expression of the covenant/unity core value, found early expression in the life of the CC(DoC) in this region. It was congregants of Barton W. Stone’s Kentucky “Christian Church,” founded in Kentucky in 1804, who traveled to Missouri to start the first congregation in Missouri, located in Salt Creek, Howard County, in 1816, just five years before Missouri statehood. The start of cooperative ministry between and among congregations began soon after with the first “district meeting” in September 1837 and the first statewide gathering in 1841. It was this first statewide meeting which marked the start of organized cooperative ministry endeavors in this region, with congregations from five counties represented. From these seeds of covenant/unity, the Christian Missionary Society of the State of Missouri was organized (1864), which grew into the Missouri Christian Convention (1882), and was later named the Missouri Association of Christian Churches (MACC). In 1874, Black Disciples formed a state convention, which did not officially merge with the MACC until 1962. Shortly

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14 Dates and details of historical significance were obtained from Griffith A. Hamlin’s Remember, Renew, Rejoice: 150 Years of Disciples in Mid-America, 1837-1987 (Fulton, MO: Ovid Bell, 1986), in particular the chart entitled “Significant Dates for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America” on pages xiii-xvii.
after Restructure, the official name of the region became the CC(DoC) in Missouri. In 1978, several churches in the St. Louis metropolitan area were added to the Missouri Region, and its name was officially changed to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America. The most recent change in the makeup of the region was the forming of the Kansas City metropolitan area into a region in 1986.

Currently, the Mid-America Region has 257 congregations which are organized into four areas: Northeast, Northwest, Ozark Lakes, and Southeast Gateway. Each area is led by an area minister who has a staffed office located within their area. The four areas are further organized into nineteen clusters. Commenting on the current state of cluster ministries, the region’s Re-envisioning Team noted that “Most Mid-America Disciples don’t know which cluster they are in because most of them are not in a cluster and because most clusters are not currently serving the perceived mission, needs and interests of members.”

Following the retirement of Danny L. Stewart as regional minister at the end of 2011, the region is currently led by Transitional Regional Minister Don Hiscox. A Re-envisioning Team is working to formulate a new vision for the future of the Mid-America Region.

When reflecting on the history of visioning and re-envisioning in the region, the Re-envisioning Team’s response clearly indicates the role of the autonomy/freedom vs. covenant/unity struggle:

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15 As listed in the 1969 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 259. Edited by Howard E. Dentler, Robert W. Crissman, and Clara S. Keltner, the Yearbook was published by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis in 1969.


We have seen the region’s finances decline (along with those of the denomination as a whole), for 40 years. Each ensuing financial crisis has prompted a cut of staff and program, but without a real change of model.

We believe the current crisis (which left unaddressed will result in the ultimate dissolution of the region and the areas) should provide a sense of urgency about creating a new model that will have a chance to succeed, rather than simply leaving congregations and ministers to “go it alone” without the support and accountability that the wider church can provide.18

One concern which members of this team heard repeatedly is best summed up in the first question which was addressed in their “Questions and Answers Regarding the Re-Envisioning of Mid-America April 2012”: “Is this just a plan to ensure survival of the Region and Areas?”

The Re-envisioning Team’s response to this question says much about the current state of ministry at the same time it begins to shape priorities for the future of regional ministry:

The Re-envisioning Team sought to discern a new approach to regional and area life that will more effectively address our mission in this post-modern era. The current “hub and spoke” model was developed in the middle of the last century, with a few adjustments along the way (mostly regarding the numbers of areas). The “hub and spoke” model is no longer effective for a number of reasons including (in part):

1) American culture no longer operates in a “hub and spoke” model, but has increasingly shifted to networking models.

2) The parallel “natural” connections and support systems that supported “hub and spoke” models of ministry have gradually declined or disappeared, including large numbers of regional and area staff, district/area assemblies, Fifth Sunday Night meetings, Rallies, and well attended regional assemblies.

The result of the gradual failure of the hub and spoke approach is, in part, that Disciples congregations have become increasingly isolated from one another, denominational loyalty has diminished, both clergy and lay leaders often feel isolated (especially, but not exclusively, in the 80% of our congregations that are in small towns and rural areas) and many congregations have drifted out of the denomination.

Another result is that regional and area ministers have often experienced exhaustion and burn out. Trying to make the old system work often feels like being an acrobat trying to keep 180 plates spinning. Also, it is increasingly difficult for congregations to receive the support they need so that conflicts that could have been creative often become destructive. Local leaders are reinventing wheels that have already been invented in many other congregations around Mid-America, etc.19

18 Ibid., 2.
19 Ibid.
The ongoing struggle between autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity in the midst of contextual and generational shifts have led to the following observations regarding the current state of ministry in the Mid-America Region:

Now in the second decade of a new century many among the three youngest generations are missing entirely from congregational life. County seat parishes that once boasted 200 or more in Sunday worship and multiple professional staff are happy to still see 80 in worship and spend up to 90% of their budgets on buildings and salaries.  

It is not a matter of currently involved people doing more. It is a matter of them doing some things that are different: less time and energy spent in committee/commission meetings and more time and energy spent in actually doing the ministry and mission….Large boards and large numbers of committees are better suited to the mid-20th century (when people experienced God primarily through institutional life) than to the early 21st century (when people experience God through relationships and doing mission). 

I personally have deep concern about the health and well-being of the four Area Ministers who will comprise the Regional Ministry Team. I can tell you that I am personally working between 70 and 75 hours per week. I know that’s not a very good model for our clergy…and I carry some guilt about that modeling for leadership.

We are suggesting in our Re-Envisioning plan that we will eliminate one professional clergy staff person and one part-time support staff. Many of the responsibilities of those positions will be shifted to the new Regional Ministry Team, and their support staff. The plan also assigns other responsibilities to the various Area offices and presumes some type of volunteer action that will engage the clergy and laity of our congregations in creative involvement in the life of the church in new and as yet unidentified ways.

We must establish a plan to effectively prioritize the work of the Regional Ministry Team, decide which tasks, if any, can be shifted to volunteers, which tasks should be continued, which tasks should be eliminated.

I am deeply concerned about the funding stream for the mission of this Region. It’s not really a long-term solution to a major problem to take a little dab of money from here and put it over there, and then exclaim that we have solved the problem. …it is clear that we will not be able to continue to fund our present hub and spoke structures and methods.

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20 Re-envisioning Team, “From Here to…? The future story of our partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Mid-America” (n.p.: Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] of Mid-America, 2012), 4.
23 Ibid., 3.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
I have watched the downward slide of the funding for outreach ministries of the Church beyond the local community of the congregation since about the mid-1970s. Many persons in positions of pastoral leadership across the Church have predicted that this slide will continue. I fear for this Region, that the slide might continue, or indeed accelerate. Dare we be so bold as to be truly revolutionary in the way that we fund the ministries of the Church?27

As this region seeks to be “truly revolutionary,” they realize that clear communication which is open to all—clergy and lay leaders as well as all who participate in the life of congregations in the region—is of vital importance. The Re-envisioning Team has prioritized both communicating about the re-envisioning process itself and creating a new and more effective communications structure.28

This re-envisioned communications network will connect and incorporate print, email, website, texting, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and other media as they are identified.29

As Transitional Regional Minister Don Hiscox reflects on the region’s re-envisioning process, he says this about its focus:

The heart and the intent of the current re-envisioning plan is, I believe, to empower congregations and clusters of congregations and their pastors to build networks of Christian witness in such a way as to provide mutual support to one another. There is energy in the region for this kind of witness in the Church, and I’m eager to learn how we can engage two-

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26 Re-envisioning Team, “Questions and Answers,” 3.
27 Don Hiscox, Report, 3.
28 The region commissioned the Visionworks Marketing Group to design a Strategic Communications Plan for the Christian Church of Mid-America (n.p.: Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] of Mid-America, 2012). In its section “Situational Analysis: Framing the Issues,” this report illustrates that the region has moved to an overemphasis on congregational autonomy/freedom, noting such issues as the following: (1) Members of the leadership at the congregational level do not see the need or benefit of increasing communication with the regional office, or to some extent, other congregations. (2) The regional and area leadership are not seen as working to develop relationships with the leadership at the congregational level…the regional office never asks people what they think…engagement is often seen as being one-sided and/or insincere. (3) The regional and area offices are not seen as authority figures. Without a centralized body of authority, enforcement of decisions and participation risks becoming non-existent. (4) Most churches work in silos. (5) Information from the regional office is not current and/or complete. (6) Congregational staff don’t have time to communicate with others outside their congregation and, since there is no perceived benefit of doing so, it is unlikely to happen.
way communication with the various expressions of the church in a covenental way that will enable us all to move forward in vibrant mission and ministry.\textsuperscript{30}

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the Re-Envisioning is its proposed elimination of the office of regional minister. The roles and functions of this office would be divided among the four area ministers, whose compensation would be increased accordingly, initially with funds from the regional budget. It is assumed that a unified budget will emerge over time, with a shift from emphasis on areas to that of reenergized cluster ministries (both geographic and affinity-based). Area ministers would continue to be deployed geographically as they are presently, with these additional responsibilities: one will convene the Regional Ministry Team and provide legal and organizational management; one will convene and coordinate the Commission on Ministry; one will coordinate the region’s Communication Team; and one will serve as liaison to the CC(DoC) general church and ecumenical ministries.\textsuperscript{31}

Other changes the re-envisioning plan calls for are the gradual elimination of all paid regional staff positions except the regional bookkeeper. In addition, the re-envisioning plan states, “Regional commissions, constituencies, and committees will be suspended as their work gradually shifts to the appropriate trained and accountable networked teams, task forces, and/or working groups. Only the Commission on Ministry, the Mid-America Budget Committee, and the Mid-America Foundation Team will remain intact.”\textsuperscript{32}

The re-envisioning process also calls for the development of a Mid-America Regional Elder ministry, which will facilitate connections between congregations and provide pastoral care to

\textsuperscript{30} Don Hiscox, \textit{Report}, 3.
\textsuperscript{31} Re-envisioning Team, \textit{Re-Envisioning the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America}, 2.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 3.
congregations and pastors. A “core team” of four elders has been identified. This team is in the process of identifying implementation options and defining this regional ministry.33

This time in the life of the Mid-America Region is aptly described in the title of their upcoming (October 2012) regional assembly: “Fearless on the New Frontier,” with a theme of Matt. 28:5a, “Do not be afraid.” The invitation to the regional assembly begins this way:

Our region is embarking on a restructuring that is unprecedented in our denomination’s life and each of our congregations faces challenges in our respective contexts in this era of great change. At the regional assembly we will consider anew the words of the angel to the women at the tomb in Matthew’s Gospel: “Do not be afraid…. He is risen.”

As we face daunting challenges and rapid changes, we will be called again to remember that we serve the resurrected Jesus Christ who goes with us into the unknown, so we can face the future with confidence rather than fear.34

Assembly attendees will be challenged to move into the future of regional ministry, which is indeed a “new frontier” in the life of the region. In their own unique Mid-America Region context, they will seek to define and live into a future of effective ministry with is connected, strong, and growing. Participants in the regional assembly will “continue the conversation already begun in areas and clusters, hear from the implementation team, and consider whether or not to continue with the restructure plan.”35 Even though implementation of this proposed plan is being discussed and planned, it would not begin until it has been approved by the regional assembly. Full implementation is then expected to take five to seven years.36

In the midst of the process of what the region and its people refer to as “re-envisioning,” information is being shared which points out and amplifies structures and processes which no

33 Ibid.
34 Mid-America Regional Assembly, “Re-envisioning the Mid-America Region” in “Fearless on the New Frontier” (n.p.: Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] of Mid-America, 2012).
35 Ibid.
longer serve to promote effective regional ministry. Efforts are being made to, as systems theorist Peter Steinke states, “take responsible action, thus shaping its own destiny.”

Much of the confusion, dissent, and outright opposition to this proposed “re-envisioning” plan stems from two concerns. First, there is confusion about functional responsibilities. If the “hub and spoke” model of regional structure is replaced by this new network-style model, functional ministry responsibilities seem unclear to many, which makes this proposed new way of doing ministry as region seem chaotic and unpredictable.

Second, in many parts of the region, there has been a definite shift in favor of autonomy/freedom. Many congregations don’t feel connected to the region (or their respective areas). They have been uninvolved in activities or events beyond themselves or perhaps with one or more neighboring congregations. Some smaller congregations feel isolated and forgotten now, but this new proposed system seems overwhelming and confusing. Some larger congregations don’t see how four coequals comprising the regional leadership team can be successful, and fear that in the confusion that might ensue upon the adoption of this new model, their leadership and resources will be overwhelmed as they receive more requests for support in the ensuing chaos.

The Mid-America Region well illustrates Steinke’s description of one which is “(struggling to) manage what it can shape and not be overwhelmed by what it cannot.” As we look for ways in which this region is moving toward greater ministry effectiveness as illustrated by increasing connection, strength, and growth, movement toward common purpose and direction is noted. Coming together to formulate the re-envisioning plan is in itself a move toward identifying and acting on a sense of purposeful direction.

37 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 11.
38 These concerns were noted in telephone interviews by the author with Transitional Regional Minister Donald Hiscox (July and August 2012) and Area Minister William Rose-Heim (August 2012).
39 Donald Hiscox, Telephone interview by the author, August 2012.
40 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 11.
In addition to this common purpose and clear direction, Peter Steinke identifies a “sense of coherence” as integral to systemic health.\textsuperscript{41} This “sense of coherence” has three components: meaningfulness (overall sense of purpose), manageability (sense of control and ability to shape their destiny), and comprehensibility (making sense of confusion and change).\textsuperscript{42}

Many in the Mid-America Region have a high degree of meaningfulness; they have been and are engaged actively in discussions and/or formulation of ministry planning for the future. There is solid agreement that the overall purpose is a healthy and vital region which is connected, strong, and growing. That said, there is a wide range in perception of manageability. Some are very confident that their voices are being heard. They believe that even though the re-envisioning plan will probably change in its implementation, they have the ability to be part of shaping that future. Some have opted out of involvement with the re-envisioning altogether, acting out of a belief that their voice(s) will make no difference and will perhaps not even be heard. Most fall somewhere in between, unsure of their ability to influence the future but in many cases willing to try. Most are fearful that resources will not be sufficient to make this new re-envisioning come to fruition, no matter what it finally looks like. The greatest challenge comes in the area of comprehensibility. So much information seems to be swirling, with so many possibilities, each choice rife with challenges and costs. The theme choice for the upcoming regional assembly, “Fearless on the New Frontier” is particularly apt. All parts of the body are needed in order for the body to be whole. This “New Frontier” which Mid-America approaches requires comprehensibility—making sense of confusion and change—in order to make possible healthy and effective future regional ministry which is connected, strong, and growing.

\textsuperscript{41} Steinke, \textit{Healthy Congregations}, 31-32.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
First Corinthians 12 teaches that a body can only function as a whole if its different parts function according to their unique gifts and talents. A body needs all its parts in order to be whole and healthy; no part is more important than another. The difficulty in balancing this diversity and unity comes at the point where diverse parts of the body must meet and work together for the health of the whole. Steinke identifies these four “core issues” which must be effectively addressed in a cohesive and comprehensible manner in order for the body (congregation, region) to be healthy and its ministry to be effective: identifying and achieving mission; identifying and implementing resources and strengths; managing anxiety; and identifying and maintaining wholeness.43

Mid-America has identified its mission and vision as “to provide resources and support for congregations, individually and collectively, as they seek to be more faithful, effective, and sustainable in the mission to which God calls us…as a continuously developing network of relationships that includes broader and deeper participation by congregations, ministers, and laity in congregational clusters and learning communities.”44 The task ahead requires them to step forward to achieve that goal. In the words of the Re-envisioning Team, “Living into a re-envisioned Mid-America Region depends on the cooperative participation of our congregations and clusters. We will need to train and facilitate networks, task forces, and working groups that will be accountable for building the capacity of our congregational leaders.”45

Mid-America is well on the way to identifying and implementing its resources. Acknowledging the reality of dwindling financial resources, there is new excitement building around new and creative ways to resource effective regional ministry.

43 Ibid., 43.
44 Re-envisioning Team, Re-Envisioning Mid-America, 1.
Although anxiety is high in many parts of the Mid-America Region, this is not necessarily a negative factor. As Steinke states so well, “Learning is struggling…precisely because of the tension, we learn.”\textsuperscript{46} New connections are being made, and new resources identified, as the path toward the future of regional ministry opens. Open and honest dialogue is occurring about the future of the region. Fears are being acknowledged, given validity, and addressed.

Mid-America is striving to live into a new and vibrant definition of wholeness. Proposed structures and role/function realignment and reprioritization seek to increase connectedness, strengthen congregational and regional resiliency, and increase the number of individuals and congregations involved in cooperative ministry and mission. This region’s contributions to the polarity map can be seen as it begins moving from a prioritization of autonomy/freedom over covenant/unity to a more balanced position. Strategies such as designing and planning to network affinity/constituency groups and purposefully reaching out to include as many individuals and congregations as possible in the new re-envisioning plan are examples of this polarity shift.

Peter Steinke states that, “Better functioning congregations (regions) are charged with spontaneity, intensity, and wholehearted involvement…less healthy congregations (regions) are more rigid, imbalanced, or lacking in elbow room. They do not have the flexibility to bend and flow.”\textsuperscript{47} Mid-America is “loosening up.” Spontaneity and flexibility are taking root in the midst of rigidity; intensity (focus on future ministry possibilities) is forging new connections (more “elbow room”); and a new sense of wholeheartedness and reemphasis on ministry together as one body is taking shape. This region is on its way to a future of effective and exciting regional ministry as it plans for and begins to see increases in connection, strength, and growth.

\textsuperscript{46} Steinke, \textit{Healthy Congregations}, 82.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 34.
Section 4. A New Day: Regional Ministry in Northern California–Nevada

The beginnings of what would become the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Northern California-Nevada emerged in the wake of the 1847 California gold rush, the 1848 end of the Mexican-American War, and the adoption of California as the nation’s thirty-first state. There were members of the Stone-Campbell movement among the many farmers and ranchers who flocked to California during this momentous time in its history. California’s first governor, Peter H. Burnett, was a former member of the Stone-Campbell movement who had become a Catholic. His brother, Glenn D. Burnett, remained a member and became one of its pioneer preachers in northern California.⁴⁸

The first congregation, located in Stockton, California, began meeting in 1851 and was host to the first State Meeting in 1855.⁴⁹ This congregation was founded and built under the leadership of Dr. W. W. Stevenson, who was also unanimously selected at the State Meeting of 1858 as the founding editor of the movement’s first state newspaper, the Western Evangelist. Dr. Stevenson tirelessly and most effectively served as a leader of the Christian Church movement in California, but he would also be the focal point for the first illustration of the struggle between autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity in the life of its developing middle judicatory. Having left behind a wife years earlier in Arkansas who declined to accompany or join him in California, Dr. Stevenson later married a local woman. This caused the congregation he served to expel him without notice or hearing. This caused his mentor, Thomas Thompson, also one of California’s pioneer preachers, to take the matter up at the next State Meeting. Thompson moved that a committee be appointed to consult with the elders of Stevenson’s now former congregation with

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.
the purpose of holding a hearing regarding his expulsion from the church. In the words of regional historian E. B. Ware,

Thompson contended for this on the ground that a preacher of the gospel has a different relation to the church than that of a member of a local congregation; that the action of a single church condemning or vindicating a preacher is not final; that the preacher, in a sense, belonged to all the churches, at any rate sister churches should be called in counsel; that no man should be expelled without a hearing in his own defense.... But it was no use; the cry of “church autonomy” prevailed. Instead of refusing to consider the matter they passed a resolution “endorsing the action of the San Francisco church.”

Though the outcome of Dr. Stevenson’s situation was one which prioritized autonomy/freedom, covenant/unity was prioritized on other fronts and in other endeavors. Meeting in 1865 in Woodland, California, those who became the Christian Church Missionary Society worked together in order to more effectively continue preaching the gospel and planting churches in California.

From its earliest roots in the region, education has been a mission priority of the Stone-Campbell movement churches. It would also be a continuing venue for the autonomy/freedom vs. covenant/unity struggle. California had no role in providing public education until 1887, when the state legislature provided funding for a free public education system. Many of the founders and advocates of education in the state brought with them educational principles they had learned from movement founder Alexander Campbell or from someone who studied directly under him.

Hesperian College was founded by those in the Stone-Campbell movement in 1860 at the outset of a decade of annual evangelistic encampments which carried a Christian education emphasis along with those of revival and salvation. By 1879-80 this annual gathering model

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50 Ibid., 50-51.
52 Ibid., 1-2.
was quickly giving way to the “convention idea for business,” with the location rotating among
the larger congregations. The 1880 State Convention, which included “inspirational preaching,”
was a delegate gathering comprised of representatives chosen by congregations to vote on
business items.53 All resolutions were decided in the name of “The Christian Churches in
California,” though the “Historical Note” in current regional by-laws state the region’s name in
1880 as “Christian Churches in Northern California,” and identify its main purposes as “to hire a
state evangelist, support churches, develop colleges, and do mission work.”54 In agreement with
these priorities, the convention appointed the first State Board of the Christian Church in
California and “State Work” was begun.55 This was followed in 1882 by the appointment of the
first State Evangelist (precursor to today’s Regional Minister), R. L. McHatton.56 This
appointment began a reinvigoration of evangelism and ministry between congregations in
districts of the state, which had become disconnected in previous years, resulting in
ineffectiveness in growth and ministry.57

Illustrative of the region’s mission emphasis on education, the 1893 State Convention
appointed its first Committee on Education to plan strategies to consolidate the church’s
involvement in educational endeavors.58 Soon the struggle between autonomy/freedom and
covenant/unity would have a pivotal role in the development of the church’s education mission,
particularly with regard to the education and preparation of ministers.

There were three forms of educational preparation for ministers in use during this time. The
first, conducted by Alexander Campbell at Bethany College, was marked by a diverse base of

53 Ibid., 2.
55 Ware, History, 205.
56 Ibid., 211.
57 Ibid. See 214-23 for a more detailed description of this growth in district ministry, which included organizing
new congregations, revitalizing existing congregations, and connecting them in support of one another. In 1883,
California churches worked together to send their first foreign missionaries to Japan.
58 McAllister, Ministerial Education, 4.
education in classical languages, literature, science, mathematics, and the Bible, offered to both ministers and laity alike. The second educational model, called a College of the Bible, was begun by John W. McGarvey in 1865 as part of Kentucky University in Lexington, Kentucky. McGarvey, a graduate of Bethany College, believed that he had not received adequate Bible training for ministry. The third preparation model was called the “Bible Chair.” Its stated purpose was to augment education in state-sponsored universities with religious education. Classes met off-campus, were taught by biblical scholars, and were financed by the church.

In this era just prior to divisions in the movement over instruments in worship, paid ministry, and participation in missionary societies, the issue at hand often became who would decide the most appropriate (and approved) method for educating and preparing ministers for the church. Would it be the local congregation (autonomy/freedom priority) or the State Convention (covenant/unity priority)? In particular, the history of the Pacific School of Religion is replete with autonomy/unity struggles which played out in disputes over biblical higher criticism, rebaptism, and open membership debates. 59

Written records seem to be sparse, but researchers drafting the most recent regional by-laws (2011) discovered that the most recent regional constitution, adopted in 1937, was titled “Constitution of the Convention of Christian Churches of California North.” On March 13, 1967, in keeping with the moves toward Restructure, the current name of the region, Christian Church

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59 Lester McAllister traces the history of Berkeley Bible Seminary’s repeated but unsuccessful attempts to join with Pacific Theological Seminary in his That There May Be Ministers: Disciples Ministerial Education in California. The two were never able to join in educational ministry. Berkeley’s intrafaculty differences regarding biblical interpretation were certainly a factor in stability not only of the seminary, but also undermined its ability to speak with a unified voice in negotiations. Pacific faculty were firmly committed to higher criticism of the Bible and “open membership” (not requiring rebaptism of those baptized in by means other than immersion), while most of Berkeley’s faculty believed this higher criticism and “open membership” undermined Christian faith itself. One of the continuing causes of this failure seems to be disputes about who had power to speak for Berkeley in merger discussions and decision-making. Eventually Berkeley Bible Seminary moved to southern California, becoming California School of Christianity, then California Christian College, and finally Chapman University in 1991. Pacific Theological Seminary became today’s Pacific School of Religion, retaining its progressive and ecumenical identity.
in Northern California-Nevada appears on a Certificate of Restatement of the Articles of Incorporation filed with the California secretary of state. Other than this filing, it is unknown exactly when the name change occurred.\textsuperscript{60}

Struggles between autonomy/freedom and covenant/unity continue in the life and ministry of today’s Christian Church in Northern California-Nevada (CCNC-N). The region is currently described as “a covenantal community of 60+ congregations and congregations in formation and approximately 6000 participating members. We are joined together to make a witness for Jesus Christ in Northern California and Nevada. We stretch from Eureka and Redding in the north, to Pacific Grove in the southwest, to Porterville in the south, and to Reno/Sparks in the east.”\textsuperscript{61}

More recently, the autonomy/freedom vs. covenant/unity struggle has been a powerful factor in discussion and decisions regarding issues of sexual orientation. California’s Proposition 8, called the California Marriage Protection Act, brought these issues not only to the forefront of public and political debate, but also threatened the unity and connection of Disciples congregations as well. In the face of these potentially deeply divisive issues, the region formed a Justice Commission, with the goal of establishing “a process to engage the differences within our region, to give voice to diversity, to inquire and seek information, to create opportunities for education and conversation and to provide processes for advocacy and healing.”\textsuperscript{62} The formation of this commission was a step which illustrates this region’s dedication to the factor of strength in effective ministry as illustrated by its steps toward maintaining a resilient unity in the face of strong forces of division at work in the church. As stated in the Justice Commission Proposal,

\textsuperscript{60} Northern California-Nevada Regional By-Laws, 5.
\textsuperscript{62} CCNC-N, Northern California-Nevada Regional Proposal for the Formation of a Justice Commission (n.p.: CCNC-N, 2010), 1. At least one congregation, the historic Disciples congregation in Visalia, California, divided over this issue, with part of the congregation becoming an independent Christian Church and the other forming a new congregation which remained in the Disciples fellowship.
Proposition 8 was not merely a political issue but a personal issue for many Disciples and touched on the differences in our theological and Biblical understandings. Our gay and lesbian pastors and lay leaders who invest their time and involvement in the Region felt the weight of this political vote acutely. They felt pain in the rejection of their identity as whole persons and their equal rights as citizens. In prayer and discernment, the Executive Committee of the Regional Board initiated a process for healing and reconciliation...a process large enough to encompass the entire Region, flexible enough to authentically welcome the diversity in our region, and hopefully actually workable. 63

The model of conversation and issue processing chosen is particularly illustrative of the region’s intention to balance covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. It is described as follows:

The Region also approved the use of a model known as Circles of Peace that would give congregations and/or groups within the church a chance to talk about questions relating to justice in a way where each voice is respectfully heard. First we would hold a Circle of Inquiry where there is a chance to share ideas and experiences about an issue. Then, some might want to form a Circle of Advocacy, planning and taking action on one side or another of the issue. Others might want to form a Circle of Healing for those who have been especially affected by that particular issue. 64

This region has been undertaking an intentional re-visioning and renewal over at least the past six years. The words the region currently uses to describe itself are an intentional balancing of autonomy/freedom (in its respect for diversity) and covenant/unity (in its voice of common mission focus):

The CCNC-N is Regional staff, local clergy and laypersons, men and women, youth, children, elderly, people of all races and backgrounds, ages and approaches to life, all of whom are united in a common faith. 65

The CCNC-N is ecumenical. We work to foster the growing partnership with the United Church of Christ, particularly through our long relationship the UCC Northern California Conference. 66

The CCNC-N is inclusive. We encourage one another to welcome all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or any other human condition, into Christian fellowship. We are seeking to become explicitly open and inclusive of all people. 67

63 Ibid., 2.
64 Justice Commission, WELCOME!, 1.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
Under the new regional structure, there are four governing bodies: (1) the Gathering, an annual event of worship, fellowship, and decision-making, which has final authority over all regional matters, with day-to-day regional operations under the authority of the other governing entities; (2) the Executive Committee, which legally functions as the CCNC-N board of directors, has final authority, but cannot act counter to the Gathering’s decisions; (3) the Administrative Ministry Council, which carries responsibility for legal, property, and fiscal concerns; and (4) the Ministry Council, which facilitates and coordinates ministry programs, as well as “spiritual and human concerns of the Region.”

Of particular interest are two new features of regional life introduced with this time of regional re-visioning and described in the region’s new by-laws: Mission Clusters and Regional Elders. Understanding that developing and strengthening connections throughout the region involves more than geographical areas or districts, the new model for regional ministry calls for overlapping connection networks. The eight geographical districts (which varied greatly in their health and even viability at the time this re-visioning process began) are retained as Mission Clusters. In addition, two types of connecting groups have been added. One is to be comprised of congregations (or groups within several congregations) who have similar interests, needs, or passion for a particular mission. The other type, called Regional Fellowship Groups, include regional men’s, women’s, youth, ethnic (such as North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, or NAPAD), and lifestyle (such as Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples, or GLAD). Potential Mission Clusters must apply to the Ministry Council, which assures the initial viability of the cluster, as well as its fit with the vision and mission of the region. Mission Clusters are not

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68 The new regional ministry model radically changed the shape of the structure from a linear to a network-based model. This difference can be most clearly seen in the new regional by-laws (16-17), which diagrams both the previous and new structural connections.
necessarily permanent; when their purpose is fulfilled or no longer exists, it disbands and informs the Ministry Council.69

The second new feature is that of Regional Elder. Regional Elders are “to facilitate and give guidance to the transformation, care, and overall health of our churches.” They are appointed by the Executive Committee to six-year terms, with one-third rotating off every two years. Their work is initiated by, and results reported to, the regional minister.70 In addition to care and shepherding of congregations, a team of five regional elders is appointed to act as a “Hearing Body” in the ministry of dispute settlement, particularly in cases where a minority believes it cannot receive a fair hearing. Hearing Body appointments are made from the Regional Elder Team and are specific to each case brought before them.

Communication and inclusion are at the heart of the new CCNC-N ministry model. In addition to the new ministry structures and strategies noted above, regional ministry leaders undertake an annual “van tour” of the region in which they stop in different portions of the region for themed dinner and conversation where all are invited, included, and heard. This year (2012) it is the “E-Van” tour (“E” for an evangelism theme).

Applying Peter Steinke’s systems theory benchmarks of health, we can see that the CCNC-N has moved to a position of health and wholeness as it lives into its future. First, the CCNC-N is definitely “taking responsible action…(and so acting to) shape its destiny.”71 Information flows freely in this region, and leaders are intentional about “correcting blocks and obstacles to the free flow of information.”72 The CCNC-N is much more able to “manage what it can shape and not

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69 Mission Clusters are described in more detail in the *Northern California-Nevada Region Mission Cluster Model*.
70 See *CCNC-N Regional Elder Ministry* for more details about this ministry.
72 Ibid., 10.
be overwhelmed by what it cannot.” The best recent example is the region’s response to California Proposition 8 and its aftermath, in which the region intentionally increased communication (listening and speaking) and demonstrated radical inclusion by inviting those of extremely diverse opinions into conversation. The formation of both the Justice Commission, with its utilization of the Circles of Peace model, and the Hearing Body demonstrate Steinke’s assertion that “A healthy congregation (region) is one that actively addresses or heals its disturbances, not one with an absence of troubles.”

Next, as with the previous two case studies, we turn to an analysis of the CCNC-N’s “sense of coherence,” which Peter Steinke posits as a “major determinant of a group’s…ability to move toward or maintain health.” This “sense of coherence” has three interrelated parts: meaningfulness, manageability, and comprehensibility. In the case of the CCNC-N, we can see high ratings in each of these three areas.

In the area of meaningfulness, again referring to Steinke’s description, we see that the CCNC-N indeed has a solid overall sense of purpose. They are willing to collectively take up a challenge, particularly that of being church together in effective ways in a new and rapidly changing context of ministry. Life and ministry matter to them; they have made, and are making, substantial commitments of time, energy, and resources because they see ministry together as worthy of such dedication and believe both their contributions and the ministry outcome to be of great value.

In the area of manageability, there is now a pervasive sense in the CCNC-N that ministry done in connection with one another can change lives, both individual and collective, for the better. They demonstrate strongly the belief that together, resources are available for effective...
ministry which makes a difference in the world. This is seen in many ways, including the meeting (and exceeding) fund- and resource-raising goals for regional ministry.\textsuperscript{76}

In the area of comprehensibility, the CCNC-N sees and judges reality soundly. They see the challenges of ministry realistically, but they refuse to let those realities freeze them into non-action, choosing instead to make sense and identify potential ministry opportunities in the midst of confusion and change.\textsuperscript{77}

Like other regions (and congregations), the CCNC-N works with four key core issues/tasks which Steinke identifies as: (1) mission—and how to achieve it; (2) strengths and resources—and how to implement them; (3) anxiety—and how to manage it; and (4) wholeness—and how to maintain it.\textsuperscript{78} Furthermore, this region has effectively and constructively addressed what Steinke identifies as four “at-risk conditions” which occur in dealing with these core issues/tasks, which I list along with the CCNC-N response to them:

(1)\textit{Overfocusing on clergy at the expense of mission.}\textsuperscript{79} CCNC-N ministry is mission-based and focused, with the example set strongly by the regional minister and those in regional leadership.

(2)\textit{Giving inadequate attention to painful events to the detriment of healing capacities.} CCNC-N ministry recognizes painful events (such as the impact of the Proposition 8 aftermath) but steadfastly focuses on and moves toward healing and reconciliation.

(3)\textit{Adapting to weakness at the cost of integrity.} CCNC-N stands firmly in the integrity of its vision and mission, namely “to be a faithful and growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality, and a passion for justice (based on Mic. 6:8),” which

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid. These four “at-risk conditions” are further described by Steinke with anecdotal examples given on 44-56.
“invites everyone to discipleship—not mere church membership—calling out and nurturing the infinite variety of spiritual gifts bestowed by God in the lives of all…witnessing, loving, and serving from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth (based on Acts 1:8).”

(4) *Taking sides and hostages at the expense of the hard tasks of love.* Particularly seen in its response to Proposition 8, the region demonstrated both the difficulty and the necessity of practicing love for one another in the very real (and many times painful) reality of vastly differing opinions and stands regarding the issue of the equality of persons of differing sexual orientations. Sides were taken and heated debates did occur; however, CCNC-N leaders led in efforts to honor diversity of opinions while maintaining unity in mission.

Of the three case study regions, the CCNC-N most clearly represents the highest degree of success in the task of balancing the polarities of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. This region exemplifies movement in the “Thriving Region” direction and away from the “Declining Region.” While the North Carolina Region is just beginning to plant seeds and plan initial moves in the direction of greater health and ministry effectiveness, and the Mid-America Region is in the midst of shaping their “Re-Envisioning” plan to move into a more healthy and effective ministry future, the CCNC-N Region is well into implementing structures and strategies which are bearing fruit in the form of more energized, focused, and growing regional ministry.

The CCNC-N Region has discovered that building and supporting affinity groups (Mission Clusters) has resulted in both honoring diversity (autonomy/freedom) and increasing connection and united mission (covenant/unity). Regular gatherings, of which “E-Van” tours and the annual Gathering are examples, has increased the sense of common mission, ministry, and identity (covenant/unity). Attendance at these events has grown, as has a spirit of dedication and

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80 Northern California-Nevada Regional By-Laws, 5.
81 All of the “Action Steps” described in the following paragraph can be seen on the Covenant/unity and Autonomy/Freedom of Congregations Polarity Map.
excitement. This is another example of positive results of focusing on covenant/unity. Regional leadership has also prioritized recognition and affirmation of congregations in their unique needs, ministries, and accomplishments. This has resulted in positive recognition of congregational autonomy/freedom as well as the covenant/unity of congregations as regional church together and serves as a practical demonstration of the body of Christ serving as one in all its diversity, as noted in 1 Cor 12:26: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

In a further note regarding healthy congregations (regions), Peter Steinke states that, “Better functioning congregations are more energized. Their interactions are charged with spontaneity, intensity, and wholehearted involvement.”82 In a recent interview, I asked Associate Regional Minister Cliff Cole how he would describe the CCNC-N with regard to these indicators.83 He stated that spontaneity has definitely increased. “People dive right in” to ministries, he said. Cole’s feedback regarding intensity described a deeper involvement in regional and cooperative (congregations and ministries working together) endeavors. In addition, he noted that the region is “very highly regarded in a great majority of its congregations” in response to my inquiry regarding Steinke’s indicator of “wholehearted involvement.”

Cole noted that although they have experienced the closing of a number of smaller congregations, many have been replaced by new ethnic congregations which more closely mirror their surrounding contexts. This new diversity is being celebrated and actively included in the life and ministry of the region.

Noting the imminent retirement of Ben Bohren, the regional minister who has led the re-\hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em \hskip1em

82 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 34.
83 Telephone interview by the author, August 1, 2012.
to maintain the momentum he has begun and led” and that “there needs to be a conscious effort at team-building and connection through the transition” to continuing health and effective ministry in the region.
Conclusion

Toward a New Day of Wholeness in CC(DoC) Regional Ministry

This project’s goal is to offer suggestions regarding prioritization and realignment of the role and functions of regional ministers in these new and rapidly changing times. Central to all three portions of the project is the historic struggle in the CC(DoC) between the core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom. This struggle has its roots in human nature and was evident in the very beginnings of Christianity itself. Nowhere in our tradition is this struggle more apparent than in the pastoral identity, role, and functions of regional ministers. Regional ministers hold vital leadership roles in the CC(DoC) as network builders. Regions have the ability to hold and strengthen the fabric of the CC(DoC) as they facilitate and build connections between congregations within them and between congregations and the general church.

As regions seek to transform for new vitality and effectiveness, this covenant/unity vs. autonomy/freedom struggle will continue. Effectively navigating the ever-changing ministry contexts in which regions find themselves requires solid connections within regions, between congregations, and between congregations and their respective regions. It also requires building and nurturing strength and resiliency in order to successfully weather unexpected challenges and commitment to growing, both in breadth (numbers) and depth (mature discipleship).

Those in regional ministry are called to exercise the authority of covenant, calling, and drawing congregations together in unity as one in the body of Christ and the world. At the same time, regions are called to respect the unique context (autonomy/freedom) of individual congregations within them. One difficulty in exercising this call lies in the reality that, in words and/or practice, many congregations prioritize autonomy over covenant with other congregations.
and/or the regional manifestation of church. This struggle between autonomy and covenant has been, is, and will probably continue to be a large deterrent to unity and mission in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Over time, regional ministers have become enmeshed in the historic struggle between the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and that of autonomy/freedom, which are woven into the fabric of the CC(DoC). This is particularly evident as regional ministers seek to transform structures and ministries in order to effectively strengthen regions as connected, strong, and growing communities of faithful congregations.

Utilizing survey results, follow-up interviews, and case studies, evidence has been identified which shows that changing and/or reprioritizing regional ministry roles and functions can lead to ministry which more effectively connects, strengthens, and grows regions and the congregations in them. As part of this project, a polarity map was constructed from positive results (increases in the effectiveness of ministry in case study regions as observed and/or measured improvements in connection, strength, and growth) and is offered as a tool for others engaged in regional ministry renewal and revitalization.

Some strategies which have proven effective in case study regions as they strive to gain and/or maintain the positive results from focusing on covenant/unity include:

1. Design and conduct regular gatherings/assemblies, education events, etc.

2. Affirm congregations and connect them to wider purpose and vision of region and/or general expression of church.

3. Support and implement common training and certification/standing for pastoral leadership.

Some strategies which have proven effective in case study regions as they strive to gain and/or maintain the positive results from focusing on autonomy/freedom include:
1. Communicate unique needs and celebrate accomplishments of congregations.

2. Take steps to ensure that congregations feel recognized, accepted, and valued for their unique identities and ministries.

Of particular interest is a strategy which has proven effective in case study regions as they strive to gain and/or maintain the positive results from focusing on both covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom is building and supporting affinity/constituency groups (geographic, music/worship, youth, men, women, children, etc.).

Observable indicators of overfocus on covenant/unity noted in case study regions include:

1. Congregations more diverse than most in region becoming uninvolved in activities and/or events beyond the congregation.

2. Congregations considering and/or choosing pastoral leadership from traditions other than CC(DoC).

Observable indicators of overfocus on covenant/unity noted in case study regions include:

1. Region finds out about significant congregational events and/or conditions too late to offer support and/or resources.

2. Decreasing attendance at regional events.

Of particular interest is a factor noted in case study regions which indicates impending negative results from an overfocus on either covenant/unity or autonomy/freedom. When congregations become nonresponsive (or slow to respond) to regional communication, this is shown to be a reliable warning sign that the balance needed for effective ministry between covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom has been compromised and/or has been lost.

Throughout the history of the CC(DoC), those in middle judicatory ministry have become enmeshed in the historic struggle between the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and
autonomy/freedom. This has been particularly evident as regional ministers seek to transform structures and ministries in order to increase the health and effectiveness of regions as connected, strong, and growing communities of congregations. It is hoped that this project will provide a resource for those engaged in regional ministry as they lead regions into a future of wholeness and effective ministry which balances the CC(DoC) core values of covenant/unity and autonomy/freedom.
Appendix 1

Survey of Regional Ministers

for

“Wholeness in a Fragmented Church: A Call to a New Day in Regional Ministry”
(Doctor of Ministry Project)

Thank you for your help with this project. Your responses will be combined and reported in combination with all other responses. Your name, region, or other easily identifiable facts will not be included in published project materials in order to maintain confidentiality and your anonymity.

Welcome to Regional Ministry: An Orientation Manual for New Regional Ministers (2009 update, 2-3) lists the following mission and ministry priorities for regional ministers, saying that as a regional minister:

1. You are called to make visible the unity of the church by:
   a. Bringing together congregations within the region where you serve
   b. Bringing together the region you serve with all regions and general ministries of the church
   c. Working ecumenically whenever possible
   d. Bringing together diverse parts of the body of Christ
2. You are called to proclaim and teach the Christian faith to which Scripture and tradition testify by:
   a. Assuring continuity of Disciples identity and witness from generation to generation
   b. Helping the church to understand the changing context in which it ministers, in order to interpret the Christian faith appropriately in ever-new situations
   c. Reflecting theologically upon the work of the church
3. You are called to give pastoral oversight to all the members of the church within the region where you serve by:
   a. Frequently being present in congregations for the purpose of preaching, teaching, and celebrating the Lord’s Supper
   b. Participating in the worship life of the church, especially at ordinations, installations, anniversaries, and dedication services
   c. Pastoring the pastors in the region where you serve
4. You are called to lead the church to carry out its mission to the world by:
   a. Interpreting the whole mission of the church
   b. Giving leadership to the Disciples of Christ
   c. Giving leadership in ecumenical bodies
5. You are called to administer the work of the ministry in the region where you serve by:
   a. Giving oversight to the work of the region as defined by your region’s bylaws, including
      the Regional Board, Regional Commission on the Ministry, and staff oversight
   b. Providing for the licensing and ordination of candidates for the order of ministry,
      certifying ministerial standing and facilitating the search and call process
   c. Usually serving as Chief Executive Officer with legal responsibilities spelled out in the
      region’s bylaws, you will be the person who represents the region as an entity as agent of
      service, signing legal, financial, and property documents
   d. Guiding the administration of your office using best practices in nonprofit management
      including regional boards’ governance, audit/financial review of the region’s activities,
      leading the region in the implementation of its mission.
   e. Understanding and coordinating denominational processes in your region such as
      Disciples Mission Fund, Special Day Offerings, audit/financial review of your region’s
      operation, general assembly priorities
6. You are called to be accountable to the whole church by:
   a. Serving as ex-officio member of the General Board
   b. Meeting with the College of Regional ministers for study and mutual support
   c. Giving leadership to boards and committees in the life of the whole church by invitation
      of the College of Regional Ministers
   d. Assuring partnership in Disciples youth, leadership development, disaster response,
      constituent ministries, and other programmatic ministries
Given the above stated priorities, would you please rank these six areas (from greatest to least) according to what currently prioritizes your time, attention, and prayer? Please simply refer to them by their number in the above listing.

#_____ (occupies the greatest time, attention, prayer)

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____ (occupies the least time, attention, prayer)

What “gets in the way” of regional ministry being all it should be in your ministry context and culture?

Given the above stated priorities, would you please rank these six areas (from greatest to least) according to what you feel should prioritize your time, attention, and prayer? Please simply refer to them by their number in the above listing.

#_____ (should occupy the greatest time, attention, prayer)

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____

#_____ (should occupy the least time, attention, prayer)

If you could change one thing about regional ministry, what would it be?

In your opinion, who are the three most effective (currently serving) regional ministers?

1.

2.

3.
Appendix 2

Middle Judicatory Ministry as Listed in the 1969 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Report of the Conference of State Secretaries and Board Chairmen

(39 total ministry entities, in order listed in the Yearbook)

Alabama Christian Missionary Cooperation
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
Arkansas Christian Churches
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Southern California and South Nevada Region
All-Canada Committee
Christian Church-Capitol Area
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Central Rocky Mountain Region
Florida Christian Church
Christian Churches of Georgia
Disciples of Christ in Hawaii
Christian Church of South Idaho
Illinois Disciples of Christ
Association of the Christian Churches in Indiana
Iowa Society of Christian Churches
Kansas Christian Churches
Kentucky Association of Christian Churches
Louisiana Association of Christian Churches
Michigan Association of Christian Churches
Christian Churches of Minnesota
Mississippi Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Missouri, Inc.
Christian Churches of Montana
Nebraska Fellowship of Christian Churches
Christian Churches of New Mexico
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
Northeast Area Association of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)
Ohio Society of Christian Churches
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania
South Carolina Christian Missionary Cooperation
South Dakota Christian Missionary Cooperation
Tennessee Association of Christian Churches
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Texas
Christian Church of Utah (Disciples of Christ)
Virginia Convention of Christian Churches
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Washington, Northern Idaho, and Alaska
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia
Appendix 3

Middle Judicatory Ministry as Listed in the 1982 *Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* Report of the Conference of Regional Ministers and Moderators

(35 total ministry entities, in order listed in the *Yearbook*)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arkansas
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California and Northwest Nevada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Capitol Area
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Central Rocky Mountain Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of South Idaho
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
Christian Church in Kansas
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisiana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, Inc.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Mississippi
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montana
Christian Church in Nebraska (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
Northeastern Association of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)
The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Pacific Southwest Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania
Christian Church of South Carolina (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest
Christian Church of Utah (Disciples of Christ)
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Virginia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada
Appendix 4

Middle Judicatory Ministry as Listed in the 1990 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Report of the Conference of Regional Ministers and Moderators

(36 total ministry entities, in order listed in the Yearbook)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arkansas
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California and Northwest Nevada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Capitol Area
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Central Rocky Mountain Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of South Idaho
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ), Inc.
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisiana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, Inc.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Mississippi
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Northeast Region, Inc.
The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Pacific Southwest Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania
Christian Church of South Carolina (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest
Christian Church of Utah (Disciples of Christ)—shared Regional Minister with Central Rocky Mountain Region
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Virginia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia
Appendix 5

Middle Judicatory Ministry as Listed in the 2000 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Report of the College of Regional Ministers

(35 total ministry entities, in order listed in the Yearbook)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arkansas
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Capitol Area
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Central Rocky Mountain Region (includes Utah)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of South Idaho
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ), Inc.
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisiana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, Inc.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Mississippi
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Northeast Region, Inc.
The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Pacific Southwest Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania
Christian Church of South Carolina (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Virginia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia

159 The College of Regional Ministers was founded in 1987. This report notes twenty-two new regional ministers since 1990. Also, the following “related organizations of the College” are listed: Forum of Regional Moderators (FORM); Conference of Area and Associate Regional Ministers (CAARM); and Association of Former Regional Ministers and Spouses.
Appendix 6

Middle Judicatory Ministry as Listed in the 2010 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Report of the College of Regional Ministers\(^{160}\)

(33 total ministry entities, in order listed in the Yearbook)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Capitol Area
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Central Rocky Mountain Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia
Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—includes Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of South Idaho
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ), Inc.
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, Inc.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montana
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Northeast Region, Inc.
The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Pacific Southwest Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania
Christian Church of South Carolina (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Virginia
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia

\(^{160}\) "Other Organizations" include the Association of Former Regional Ministers and Spouses, but there is no listing for the Forum of Regional Moderators (FORM) or the Conference of Area and Associate Regional Ministers (CAARM).
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