

A Process For Listening

Mid-America Region,
January 23, 2009

The following process is proposed with several understandings in mind. First, that we are dealing with limited or reduced funding. Second, that this process needs to include all the partners, but especially congregations whom we seek to serve. We need those who are in the congregations across the Region to have ownership. Finally, this is an imperfect way of doing this. We understanding planning expands to fill the time allotted, with limited time we may miss some needs, understandings and steps. This is but a new path of a long journey started many years ago on the western frontier of Kentucky; our shared journey of faith known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1. Within the next three months [March, April, May] each Area will host listening conferences [number and location determined by each Area] with leaders and members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America. The conferences will be supported by the letter written by Danny Stewart, Regional Minister and should be presented at the listening conferences and before in such a manner that each will have ability to read the text in full. The Letter should be sent by email to all clergy and congregations and placed on the Web sites of the Region/ Areas, as soon as possible. A note with the sending or posting of this letter should state that listening conferences are being set across the Region [if possible set dates announced] for response and reaction to the letter and to the questions to be considered at the varied listening conferences.

The conferences will be seeking responses to five questions:

1. What do congregations really need from the Region and Areas?
2. Which of these tasks are best suited to the Region and which to the Areas (and which need to be shared)?
3. What tasks no longer need to be done by the Region? By the Areas?
4. What tasks need to be done in a different way and how?
5. Is there anything else you want to add?

This process will have at least two leaders from the Area at each listening event. One will lead the discussion the other will be a reporter, recording the information in a way that can be kept and sent to the Vision committee [to be described later] and the Region/ Area offices. The recorder may be Area/ Regional Staff. The discussion leader should be a person knowledgeable in Area/ Regional work, and has read and understands the letter from Dr. Stewart, and the direction the questions are taking the Region/Areas.

Dr. Stewart's letter will be published in the regional newsletter, sent to all Area offices to be sent out via email to their lists of clergy and lay leaders, and to each congregation's Board Chair and clergy persons. This letter should be published on each Area's web page and the process and opportunities to give input announced by each area in manners appropriate to each Area.

Following the listening conference in each Area, a means through the web should be established for those unable to attend the listening conferences to respond individually to the five questions.

By June 1, all responses should be into the Area and Regional offices.

2. The data received by the Regional office should be collated in a simple listing of responses to each question. This information will be sent to Area Board/Executive Committees for their response to what they are hearing. This information should be sent to the Regional Office by July 1.

Between July 1 and August 28, the information gathered will be reflected upon by a special vision committee of the Region. This special leaders group will be 2 members of each Area selected and identified by each Area to sit on the committee under the leadership of the Regional Structure Chair and committee with the Regional Minister attending for support and insights [without vote]. The final report will be ready for a special called meeting of the Council of Area, called into retreat for the study and action upon the report given. The specific process for this retreat will be established during this interim period prior to the event. The retreat will be the weekend of August 28-29, sleeping and meals arrangements at the Rickman Center, meeting in the Mission Center. This meeting will be announced at the May 2nd meeting of the Council of Areas, if so established. [Consultation with Patty Howard and Bill Ryan has taken place and accepted. Final confirmation to Rickman must take place by March 1.]