

By-laws of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest 5064 Lincoln Street, Newton, IA 50208

Approved by Operations Council on December 19, 2019.

Preamble: A Disciples Together Form of Ministry

I believe we can change the world

If we start listening to one another again

Simple, honest, human conversation

Not mediation, negotiation, problem solving, debate or public meetings

Simple truthful conversation

Where we each have a chance to speak

We each feel heard and

We each listen well.

-Margaret J. Wheatley, Ed.D.

The New Structure

The Vision Task Force proposed the structural changes that sought to fulfill the principles described in the Appendix. Those changes were approved by the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church in the Upper Midwest on April 9, 2011.

1. *The Gathered Body* is a discernment group that is engaged in conversation and development of ministry initiatives. Ministries will arise from these gatherings instead of being handed down from the denomination or regional staff. The Gathered Body meetings will meet 1-2 times per year.

2. The Gathered Body is comprised of Disciples from congregations (all are invited) within the UMW region and include 2 voting lay representatives from each congregation. All clergy with standing can vote. Larger churches do not have more representation, and it is hoped that laity will outnumber clergy at the event.

3. The 24 member *Operations Council* is the administrative board of the Region. There is a lay majority on the board (14 laity/9 clergy/1 youth). Lay members are selected primarily by the Gathered Body by geographic areas. Clergy members are selected at-large. Youth member selected by Upper Midwest Youth Council (UMWYC).

4. The Operations Council affirms nominations for the three *Ministry Functions*: Commissions/Committees on Ministry, Personnel, and Property.
5. *Ministries* that emerge from the Gathered Body discernment process are commissioned and may apply for funding to the Operations Council, and their budgets will come before the Regional Assembly.
6. When needed, the Gathered Body will break into an administrative session and become the Regional Assembly, chaired by the Regional Moderator.
7. The Gathered Body, Regional Assembly, and Operations Council are open meetings, except when Operations Council is called into executive session.

The “Disciples Together” form of ministry is comprised of these structural elements:

I. Gathered Body

A. Purpose: To gather together in conversation to foster relationship with the diversity of voices throughout the congregations in the Region and to provide an intentional time for discernment of what God would ask us to do in ministry as “Disciples Together.”

B. Primary responsibilities

1. Gather the voices of the congregations
2. Build relationships by providing space for conversations
3. Discern and commission ministries as needed
4. Elect representatives to Operations Council (14 lay by geographic area, 9 clergy at large, 1 youth by UMWYC) - vacancies to be addressed by Operations Council
5. Final approval of nominations brought by Operations Council

C. Basic structure

1. Full day meeting/retreat
2. 1-2 meetings a year
3. Guided and led by the Regional Minister in cooperation with Regional Leadership as described below
4. Focused on intentional ongoing conversational sharing and discernment to authentically get to know each other and, within this experience, share ministry ideas
5. Use intentionally designed processes that allow for large groups to share with each other while allowing common ministries to arise in the group
6. The Gathered Body will commission ministries for the next year

D. Membership Participation

1. Every congregation is invited to send laypeople to the gathering, with no more than two serving as voting delegates
2. All clergy with standing are invited to attend and serve as voting delegates
3. Regional Staff are invited to attend and serve as non-voting members

II. Operations Council

A. Purpose: Serve as the main administrative entity for the Region.

B. Membership Participation:

1. 14 lay representatives are chosen by the Gathered Body; one from each of the 14 ministry areas of the Region
2. 9 clergy are chosen by the clergy
3. 1 Youth representative selected by Upper Midwest Youth Council (UMWYC)

C. Basic Structure

1. Meets a minimum of 4 times a year or as needed. Meetings may be in person, and electronic meetings and voting are permissible.
2. Elects officers as needed, including but not limited to: moderator, moderator-elect and treasurer
3. Terms are 3 years, staggered
4. Members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms with a sabbatical year required before being eligible to serve again
5. Members who fill an unexpired term will begin their first full term after the completion of their partial term.
6. Led by elected moderator
7. Action items are passed by a simple majority

D. Primary Responsibilities

1. Affirm nominations for Ministry Functions
2. Submit a budget to be approved by the administrative session of the Gathered Body (Regional Assembly)
3. Oversee the approved budget
4. Serve as legal administrative entity of the Region
5. Decide and distribute all grants
6. Serve as the evaluative committee of the new structure with responsibility of bringing amendments to the structure before the Gathered Body administrative session.
7. Serve as "elder leadership" for the Region.
8. Approve filling vacancies between Gathered Body/Regional Assembly meetings.

III. Ministry Functions

A. Purpose: Those activities of the Region that are needed for legal or other administrative reasons.

B. Membership: Annual nominations will be accepted from all parts of the Region, received by each commission/committee, to be affirmed by the Operations Council.

C. Basic Structure: The Ministry Functions of the Region are:

1. Commission/Committee on Ministry
2. Commission/Committee on Personnel
3. Commission/Committee on Property

IV. Ministries

A. Purpose: Those activities discerned by the Gathered Body to be expressions of our

call from God.

- B. Membership: Any Disciple within the CCUMW who feels called to take part in a ministry
- C. Basic Structure: Ministries that emerge from the Gathered Body discernment process will be commissioned and may apply for funding to the Operations Council, with their budgets coming before the Gathered Body/Regional Assembly.
 - 1. Each ministry will determine its own leadership organizational pattern
 - 2. Each ministry will communicate its progress to the Operations Council
 - 3. Once ministries have been commissioned we will invite others to participate
 - 4. Any financial needs for these ministries will be submitted to the Operations Council, which will propose a budget to the Gathered Body/Regional Assembly.

V. Regional Leadership

A. Regional Moderator

- 1. Elected annually, from within the Operations Council membership
- 2. Chairs the regular meetings of the Operations Council
- 3. Represents the CCUMW to the General Church of the CC(DOC)
- 4. Gather the Search Committee for the Regional Minister and President in consultation with the Office of the General Minister and President

B. Regional Moderator-Elect

- 1. Elected annually, from within the Operations Council membership
- 2. Chairs the regular meetings of the Operations Council in the absence of the Regional Moderator
- 3. Stands for election as the moderator following the completion of the current moderator's term

C. Regional Treasurer

- 1. Elected annually, from within the Operations Council membership
- 2. Serves as chair of the Budget Committee
- 3. Receives financial reports from the Region's contracted accounting service
- 4. Oversees the financial well-being of the Region

D. Regional Representative to the General Board of the CC(DOC)

- 1. Nominated by the Regional Minister and President and confirmed by the Operations Council
- 2. The Regional Moderator may serve in this capacity

E. Regional Minister and President

- 1. Roles and Responsibilities including, but not limited to:
 - a. Head of Staff
 - b. Pastor to pastors
 - c. Regional executive
 - d. Visionary leader
 - e. Facilitating Disciples Together ministries
- 2. Search Process
 - a. Search Committee will be formed by the Regional Moderator in cooperation with the Commission on Personnel according to the

- guidelines of the search process outlined by the Office of the General Minister and President
 - b. Search Process is guided by the Office of the General Minister and President
 - c. Search Committee will present a final candidate for interview and approval to the Operations Council
 - d. Operations Council will approve a final Letter of Call and the Search Committee will extend a call to the final candidate
- 3. Removal of a Regional Minister and President
 - a. Upon recommendation by the Personnel Committee, a Regional Minister may be removed by a simple majority vote of the Operations Council
 - b. If a Regional Minister's ministerial standing is removed by the General Church's Commission on Ministry, the Regional Minister will be terminated immediately.

VI. Provision for Changing These By-laws

- A. Changes to these by-laws must be approved by the Operations Council
- B. Two week written notice for a called meeting must be given to all members before a vote

Appendix

Background on the Regional Structure:

The 2003 Upper Midwest Regional Assembly prayerfully and unanimously adopted a bold new ministry vision entitled *Disciples Together, Sharing in the Fullness of God's Table, For the Blessing of All*. Throughout the last seven years, we've phased in the *Disciples Together* strategy. The next phase prescribed in the vision is to modify our structure in order to fully embrace this new vision for ministry.

Since 2003, we've seen dramatic results as we've lived into the *Disciples Together* vision. We were able to recognize that energetic regional ministries, programs and resources are more likely to spring forth *from* congregations than to be distributed *to* congregations from the hub of a regional office. The new vision enables more congregations to work together at a time when financial constraints have led to dramatic decreases in regional staff. Individuals throughout the region are uniting around "God inspired calls." The relational components of the vision have led to churches reengaging in regional ministries instead of keeping them at arm's length.

The region's approach and framework for doing ministry has significantly shifted over the years. However, much of our formal structure is designed to support the "hub" concept of region rather than the "web of connected congregations and individuals" concept that we have been practicing. In order to keep on track with the next phase of the vision and to align our current ministry approach with our structure, the Regional Board has taken action. In 2010, a Vision Task Force was charged with the mission of

proposing a structure that will enable us to move fully into the *Disciples Together* vision.

What if...?

As the Vision Task Force approached its work, a dream began to take shape of a transformed and revitalized region. The “what if” question clarified our direction:

- *What if* we recognized that congregations are the starting point for passion-based ministries?
- *What if* we had a new kind of gathering where ministries could emerge from new conversations?
- *What if* we had a region where laity are much more involved at every level?
- *What if* smaller churches and congregations throughout all parts of the region felt that they were indispensable parts of the regional body?
- *What if* our gatherings weren't about hearing reports and voting but about discerning and validating?
- *What if* the region's ministry was to help facilitate ministry instead of gatekeeping?
- *What if* we invited congregations to participate rather than presuming they were on board?

Guiding Principles

When the Vision Task Force asked these kinds of questions, certain principles emerged which guided the vision for a new structure. The new structure would need to be:

- Consistent with the *Disciples Together* vision
- Relational rather than hierarchical
- Laity-oriented rather than clergy-dominated
- Inclusive of the entire region rather than oriented toward big and central Iowa congregations.
- One where leadership selection is determined by passions and a large group rather than a self-replicating nominating process.
- Permission-giving and invitational.
- True to our Disciples heritage and allowing for diverse forms of ministry and opinions with folks still celebrating at the common table
- One that celebrates the life-cycles of ministries and is not interested in perpetuating ministries because “that is how we have always done things.”
- Flexible to adapt to new ministry opportunities.
- One where meetings are focused on engaging in ministry rather than receiving reports.
- Driven by spiritual discernment rather than parliamentary procedure and votes that divide “winners and losers.”

Elder Leadership

To serve as “Elder Leadership” on behalf of the ministry we do together as congregations including: Theological Vision and purpose. Continue to reevaluate and reform our practices, structures and assumptions over time making sure what we do together is relevant and theologically consistent.

Geographic Areas

- Minnesota/North Dakota Area
- Spencer, Iowa/Sioux City, Iowa/South Dakota Area
- Iowa Areas
 - Boone Area
 - Waterloo Area
 - Oakland Area
 - Des Moines Area
 - Keokuk Area
 - Altoona Area
 - Marshalltown Area
 - Ottumwa Area
 - Muscatine/Davenport Area
 - Hampton Area
 - Panora Area
 - Creston/Osceola Area