

**Report of the Regional Transition Team
to the Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)
May 3, 2019**

The Regional Transition Team (RTT) was created by the approval of an emergency resolution at the October 2018 Regional Assembly. The resolution expressed an intent “to reaffirm our bonds by committing to a period and a process of intentional discernment, prayer, and action, for the sake of reconstituting ourselves and renewing our covenant, at the end, into a newly organized body of cooperative ministry which aims to support its members in the hard and necessary work of our calling.” The resolution called the RTT, and the region, to open to the pouring out of God’s Spirit, to share visions and dreams together, to seek the new thing God is doing among us, and to embrace bold, risk-taking, trailblazing ways of sharing and supporting mission and ministry.

By the time the Regional Assembly gathers again on May 11, 2019, the RTT will have met via video conference 15 times and joined with the Regional Church Council at its March meeting. Members attended clergy gatherings across the state and communicated with Regional Elders, ministers, and congregational leaders. We consulted with numerous persons outside the region: other middle judicatory leaders within the Disciples as well as several ecumenical partners; current and former general church leaders; a few other consultants; and clergy and lay leaders in other regions. Early on, the team rolled out a two-step approach for receiving input from Disciples across Ohio. Congregations were asked to engage five questions cultivating areas of discernment wherein we began “holy listening” to one another and to God’s presence within our brother- and sisterhood of churches across the region. We then asked congregational representatives to bring those answers to district listening sessions and engage in more focused questions confronting aspects of our regional community. In addition, the team welcomed any other reports, input, or feedback offered from clergy gatherings, congregational meetings, or individuals. In sum, there were twelve district listening sessions with 236 participants representing 66 churches out of 115. Additionally, reports from at least seven congregational meetings, clergy gatherings, and individuals were submitted.

Through these various reports, meetings, reflections, and conversations, several themes emerged regarding Ohio Disciples.

Who We Are

We represent congregations that thrive in collaboration. Again and again people spoke about vital cooperative ministries in congregations of various sizes, highlighting the importance of working with neighboring faith communities as well as congregations within our denomination. We love sharing what we do well. Those gathered heard about churches that lead Worship and Wonder trainings, Safe Space trainings, Elder and Deacon trainings, and churches with skills to share about making our message for a modern age. We learned about local churches in Columbus partnering across denominations for the food pantry, NNEMAP. We learned about Disciples churches across the state supporting a food and clothing mission at Camp Christian. And we learned about many individual congregations providing space for local non-profits and other outside churches to use their facilities throughout the week. We learned about the passion for shared ministry at Camp Christian and for youth, young adult, and men’s and women’s ministries. And we heard about joint mission trips between local youth groups and for adults, as well as the Ohio region’s annual UN seminar for youth from across the state. Over and over again, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations in Ohio revealed the shared value of the importance of relationship as we deepen our walk with Christ.

We value hospitality. We welcome diverse interpretations of the Bible. As one participant said at a listening session, “We welcome study both inside *and* outside the church.” We live the open communion that we practice. We believe everyone is welcome at the Table and we try to practice the radical hospitality in our congregations that Jesus extends

to us. Across the region, many people described passion for anti-racism ministries and the importance of healing the racial divide in our world. Some congregations identify themselves as “open and affirming,” meaning that they name hospitality extending to all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. When asked what you would tell twenty strangers about our church, many respondents shared a reverence for those outside the church. “I would ask about the strangers first,” replied one participant. Others described the importance of meeting the needs of those in their midst whether church members or not.

We value gathering together for events. As congregations that value collaboration and hospitality, it is not surprising that many people described vital moments of ministry around shared events. These vital events ranged from youth summer camp to young adult conferences to adult conference to spiritual life retreats to joint choir performances to district rallies to joint vacation Bible school to youth midwinters to Disciples Men and Disciples Women gatherings. Our memory is long and rich. Many participants described the importance of learning from neighboring congregations new ways of worshiping, reaching out, and relating to the community.

We share a love for missions. Throughout every question answered, participants heard about myriad ways congregations serve with the wider church, local non-profits, and ecumenical and interfaith groups. From Week of Compassion to volunteering with Disciples Volunteering to Faithful Advocates Serving Together to joining together to do a Habitat Build or an Appalachian Service Project week, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) churches in Ohio thrive when serving others together. This is reflected throughout this document, including the themes of collaboration, hospitality, and gathering for events.

We value supported clergy. We heard throughout the state the pride many people have for Camp Christian, and while many reasons were lifted up for valuing Camp one frequent mention was the way the camp program nurtures many calls to ministry. We also heard great appreciation for the ability of the Commission on Ministry to shepherd new pastors and support new pastors in their call to ministry. Then there were references to support through various seasons of experience. One person in particular thought fondly on a time when regional pastors helped a local minister with addiction issues. Another person described how regional elders helped to nurture a call to ministry. We understand the importance of growing pastors and supporting them in their established calls to ministry.

We have a rich history that extends beyond our borders. This is true in missions, as Ohio Disciples were often deeply involved in ministries that came to take root across the denomination. It was lifted up in listening sessions as people reflected on the impact of Camp Christian and the way that those who were formed in the faith in Ohio congregations offered gifts of leadership, ordained or otherwise, across the country and throughout the denomination. Separate from the listening sessions, this was a particular point in conversations with Disciples outside the region who named ways that Ohio has led and innovated in the past and expressed their hope or admiration for the possibility that Ohio Disciples may once again have a role in leading the church into a new day.

Challenges we Face

We struggle with a changing culture. We heard from many congregations whose membership is in decline. Most of our churches are missing teenagers, people in their twenties, thirties, even forties. As one participant said, “As the older (formerly active) members of the church are dying, dealing with health issues, etc., there aren’t enough younger people stepping into leadership roles or offering financial support. There is a feeling of stagnation, more than decline.” One unofficial quantitative assessment shared, “factoring for reduced numbers of congregations, the attendance figure itself goes down about 3 to 5% each year” for the Ohio Region. This decline affects leadership, financial ability to support the mission of the church, and a feeling of relevance. It should surprise no one to say that the world around us is changing

and we have not kept up. Yet we know that we do not struggle alone. Which is to say, this is not a challenge that is unique to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), to Ohio Disciples, or to any one local congregation. The changing social and cultural landscape have wrought what is increasingly described as “the end of Christendom” - that is, the end of a culture that favors or even assumes the presence of Christianity. Our communities are “less church-ed” than they once were. There is opportunity to embrace transformation, to experiment with new forms of mission, evangelism, and even community. Our faith impels us to reach new ears, minds, and hearts with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our financial resources cannot sustain, or even return us to, mission and ministry in models of the past.. While God needs just crumbs to work miracles, we need to understand the crumbs we are working with! Learning to see crumbs as seeds of opportunity can reframe our perspective. Many of our churches in the region shared the feeling that they are in survival mode. Many churches that were once served by full-time pastors now can only afford part-time clergy. This is a stressful time. It is important to note that this is not *all* congregations in the region. But it is most. Yet there is opportunity in this, especially as we operate with a perspective for abundance rather than scarcity. The outpouring of support for retiring the debt at Camp Christian exemplifies this. Led by the efforts of Al and Donna Channell, and inspired by the work of our youth, support poured in from across the region to clear this burden from our balance sheet. In the face of financial challenge, the question remains the same: what is God calling us to do? When we put mission first, following where God calls us to be present, to witness, and to serve, the resources will come. We are largely depending, in congregations as in the region, less on paid staff; instead, we are called to work together, serve together, share, risk, and learn together, as we grow and reach out in faith, learning to find new ways to be church. In listening sessions, the Regional Elders were often lifted up as an important point of contact, resourcing, and support. As a Team, we have observed a growing strength in this group, filling part of a void created by the loss of regional staff.

We have trouble communicating with all generations. Some who gathered at listening sessions described a general feeling of unease because of a vacuum of communication. There were conflicting thoughts on communication because more information is available at our fingertips than ever before through the region’s website; however, many in the church do not pay close attention to the website and prefer other modes of communication. Updates are also not as frequent as some would like: because information can be posted quickly and easily, there is a rising expectation that this should be so; yet limitations on staff and the increased requirements on volunteers work against this expectation. In addition, social media is not without its challenges as the multitudinous mediums of communication cause many people to miss messages. Yet the breadth of communication tools available to us can enrich our cooperative efforts. Video conferencing tools enabled meetings that would have been incredibly challenging. The RTT was pleased to offer a listening session in this format so that anyone with a computer or smartphone had a chance to participate. While there are clearly kinks to work out with these systems, the investment of time and energy to sort these out can strengthen the ties that bind us all and boost opportunities for missional collaboration.

Our understanding of “region” is fractured and varies greatly. Clearly the events of recent years have brought to light some challenges and created others in our collective body & way of being. We are wounded. A current of unease and distrust surfaced often, though with decreasing frequency, over the last six months. Because trust was violated, there is reticence to invest in our shared life together, financially and in other ways. Even discussing these challenges is difficult because we carry different understandings for what “region” means. In conversations and listening sessions, some expressed the opinion that they had no need of the region; others that its only value or purpose was in maintaining Camp Christian or supporting congregations during pastoral searches. Still others responded to the question, “What resources will your church commit toward helping ... the region that emerges” like the person who replied, “What do you need us to do?” This response was helpful to the RTT’s thinking, as our impulse was to push back against the “you” / “us” distinction. We realized that we reflected that distinction in early processes and have worked, since then, to speak

and operate from an “us” perspective. Here is the opportunity in this challenge: if we use the word “region” to be clear that we are not talking about an office or a particular staff person or even Camp Christian and instead understand it to mean “we” or “all of us” or “our brother/sister congregations,” we will make tremendous strides not only in repairing the breaches that have formed but in finding our way forward together. Many of those among us who expressed the most negative views of “the region” still found cause to praise and lift up relations with neighboring congregations. It is the hope and intent of the RTT that the use of the word “region” in this report reflects nothing more and nothing less than the communities of faith and their members which covenant to be in relationship as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Ohio, supporting each other as each one carries out God’s mission and ministry in our respective communities.

I am about to do a new thing;
 now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
 I will make a way in the wilderness
 and rivers in the desert. ~ Isaiah 43:19

A Bridge on the Journey

For the members of the Regional Transition Team, these last six months have been an intense period of listening, discerning, processing, and visioning together. We undertook our task with a goal of having specific recommendations for moving forward, and we offer those below: but it has become clear that this time is only the beginning of a period of faithful transformation, of listening for God’s leading and learning to follow, even as we sometimes flail or fail, into a new and renewed journey in faith. The Regional Transition Team recommends the next three and a half years as a period for intentional collaboration, experimentation, and risk-taking as we, Ohio Disciples, build on our strengths and identity while attending to areas for growth toward becoming who God is calling us to be.

The heart of the region is its congregations. Mission and ministry are carried out with and through local congregations. Certainly, there are ministries that congregations cannot on their own accomplish. These shared ministries and the structures (regional and general) that support them arose in the history of our movement out of the desire to do cooperatively what we could not do (or do as well) on our own. Yet in many ways the tail has come to wag the dog, and struggling congregations have been drawn toward a difficult decision: do we expend our resources to continue to support these long-standing shared ministries, or do we hold onto an increasing proportion of resources to support local ministries (or even, to keep our doors open, our lights on, and our payroll met)? We generally want to be able to do both. In order to do so, to maintain covenant with our regional and denominational partners and pursue our own missions and ministries, we have to change. Rather than being done for the sake of survival, it must be mission driven. Given the changing reality faced by congregations, the RTT recommends a rebalancing for this time with an emphasis on evangelism, witness, service, and mission. This rebalancing can be conceived in a three-fold focus:

- 1) building on the strength of our relationships with each other;
- 2) nurturing relationships outside the region; and
- 3) calling and developing leaders gifted and equipped to lead in new ways.

Taken together, these focus areas affirm our desire to be, collectively, as region:

A covenant network of faith communities supporting each other as we spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in witness, service, and mission.

Rebalancing of Regional Life Together: A Threefold Focus

Focus 1: Building on the strength of our relationships with each other for evangelism, witness, service, and mission

In the current climate and reality of denominational life, as resources decrease, there is movement toward continuing operations (ministries) through consolidation. For example, wider ministries are brought together to cut down on staff and share certain tasks, and regions are merged (or share staff) to maintain a large enough congregational base of support. Consolidation may extend the life of particular shared ministries but it does not address the underlying problems. Absent intentionality, merged ministries and regions will keep consolidating until they simply collapse. ***This is the time to refocus our gaze, priorities, and resources in the opposite direction; rather than propping up struggling institutions which are on a path of decline, we need to risk our investment in the place that matters the most: congregations.*** Congregations are where mission and ministry are lived out. Congregations are the complex communities where disciples are called, formed, and equipped. Congregations are the front lines for resourcing Christians and propelling us into the world to be and to bear the Good News, to live out the Gospel and invite others into a transformational relationship with Jesus. Because congregations are struggling in this mission, we also need to be transformed. Such transformation may be enabled by a shift in focus to supporting, resourcing, empowering, and collaborating congregationally for making disciples and equipping the saints to offer our gifts in mission. Further, by identifying common missional interests and efforts, we can connect congregations and strengthen the work of each. *We envision a redirecting of regional resources for congregational collaborations.* This might be achieved, as an example, by offering grants to congregations working together:

- for special events planned and hosted by congregations (we see value in intentionally lifting up of gifts, talents, and experience of specific congregations and offering those to each other along shared missional interests); or
- for the launching of new initiatives for clusters of congregations, whether for one time events or as seed support for emerging ministries within and between congregations.

Focus 2: Nurturing relationships outside the region for evangelism, witness, service, and mission

We already partner, as congregations, with a diverse array of ecumenical, interfaith, social service, and other agencies. Sharing these partnerships with each other and purposefully increasing our engagement with organizations outside the region will increase opportunities and capacity for collaborating - literally, co-laboring, for:

- evangelism and growth, for calling new disciples;
- witnessing to our faith by living out our various callings for mission;
- living our call to justice with those whom God calls us to be in relationship with;
- expanding access to resources, for the living out of our local mission; and
- increasing our impact, our reach.

In looking outside our walls, we will find new partners for this journey. We may discover other faith communities who have much to teach us about alternative gatherings or outreach or evangelism. We may find new partners with whom we can offer that local ministry which we cannot resource our own. Rather than recreating the wheel where a particular mission is already supported, we can redirect our resources into that effort. As we work with intentionality, the RTT envisions formal and informal partnerships may develop in areas including missions, search and call, and leadership development; for joining programming, camps, and conferences across denominations; or toward sharing aspects of Christian life we have not yet lived out. Disciples have long affirmed that “we are not the only Christians; we are Christians only.” Nurturing relationships with other organizations and missional partners puts this belief into action.

Focus 3: Calling and developing leaders gifted and equipped to lead in new ways for evangelism, witness, service, and mission

Paul writes, “The gifts [Jesus] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12). God continues to raise pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists, and apostles among us. Following God’s call to equip the saints for the work of ministry means understanding the forces in the world changing congregational life. This will impact the related tasks of reaching out to our neighbors with the Good News (in word and action) while also transforming our faith communities to receive new generations of believers (of all ages). In many places, our congregations are declining because their communities are declining. In such places, our responsibility as covenantal partners is to be companions through the journey. In other places, the challenge is how to share the life changing, soul saving power of our faith in ways that are relevant to new believers yet still authentic to who we are. Already, many of our congregations, no longer able to afford pastoral staff at a level once common, have had to change leadership models. It is imperative in these environments that we are supporting and equipping our leaders for myriad models of ministry. In one congregation, pastoral leadership may look like a part-time preacher with strong lay-leadership. In another congregation, a pastor may look like a teacher to a growing community of new disciples.

Regionally we must reorient our shared life around the increasing prevalence of dual and multi-vocational leaders with less flexible schedules. A shift in expectations and a lifting up of non-traditional gifts, such as entrepreneurship and innovation, may birth ministries and faith communities that look radically different from currently dominant models. Leaders with such gifts may have much to teach a system that learns to offer support and resourcing to nontraditional efforts. Embracing new forms of leadership may open us all to new possibilities for the living out of our faith. We underscore our commitment to the priesthood of all believers as we call each one to develop and offer their gifts in service through the church, participating in God’s mission in the world.

Which Bridge to Travel?

While there are many paths we could choose for this next leg of our journey together, many “bridges” that would carry us into the future, the RTT has concluded that it is premature to claim a particular path, long-term model, or solution. Yet the work of these past six months has made clear that we are ready to begin to “be region” differently. The following recommendations, then, are made for the sake of promoting not a set path but a direction, based on our shared values and identified areas of focus. Intentional adaptations to our leadership structures and finances will undergird our travels on this next leg of our journey, ultimately leading to systemic reform as new forms grow from new ways of being. What is important now is shaping a culture of excitement, experimentation, and exploration that promotes the discovery of new ways of doing and being both region and church, of making, equipping, and sending disciples with God, living out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finances. The financial challenges we as a region have faced have absorbed a great deal of attention. As a team we received many expressions of concern for trust and accountability stemming from revelations about our financial reality that emerged over the last two years. We commend regional leadership for their work to address each issue as it came to light and for proactively taking steps to improve accountability for the future. Unfortunately, our regional communications challenges have enabled some ongoing concerns as many are not aware of the steps the Regional Church Council took in 2017 and 2018, particularly contracting with Treasury Services in Indianapolis. This positive development provides professional oversight for our finances by involving an agency outside the Christian Church in Ohio.

The RTT also affirms other concerns regarding financial challenges we face. Among these are the obligation to replenish money spent from some restricted funds and the need to shore up cash reserves for emergencies and lean periods. In the predominant model of regional ministry which we have been accustomed to, there is an expectation of having staff support for core functions such as pastoral and congregational search and call, commission on the ministry, pastoral care, and crisis support. Envisioning an approach to meet all needs, obligations, and expectations was difficult. There are challenges in making long-term income projections (due in part to the insecurities of congregational support, exacerbated by the recent breach of trust). Taken together, we know that there is no “going back” to the previous model of regional staffing and that what is sustainable now may not be in another 3-5 years.

Without ignoring the crises and the financial realities, as a team we have endeavored to be led by the Spirit and a sense for mission. We have also made a concerted effort to vision from a perspective of abundance rather than one of scarcity. The recommendations that follow are aimed at providing some stability across this next leg of our journey while enabling the focuses described above.

- 1) Freeze the region’s DMF share at 50% during this time (rather than return to the 60% split we previously contributed).

In communicating this change, we also recommend communicating an affirmation that we (the region) are a part of one larger system (the denomination). We express deep appreciation for the support from the general church and other regions (among them, we’re particularly mindful of the special offering taken up at the 2018 Regional Assembly of the Indiana region). We also state the obvious, that as a region we are not alone in this time of challenge. Just as congregations and church members have expressed their desire for more communication, transparency, accountability, and change from the region, so we should express our desire for these things from the general church. In short, we affirm that we are all in this together and that we need to see wider ministries not just dealing with challenges (by reductions and consolidations, for example) but proactively addressing them with a concern for and emphasis on congregational vitality and missions.

- 2) Call transitional staff appropriate to the journey we are on - not for resuming former ways, but for supporting us as we strive to embody anew our covenantal commitments to support each other as we spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in witness, service, and mission. The RTT sees the most likely possibility is the calling of a half-time position, a Transitional Regional Curate, described in the leadership section, below. By initiating the process now, staff may be called for the three year period, Jan. 1, 2020 through Dec. 31, 2022. Were hiring capacity increased, there is an additional recommendation, but our primary one is in light of the most realistic figures available. Should we as region desire more staffing, we will have to increase our collective contributions.
- 3) Express gratitude for our neighboring regions and Regional Ministers for their support during this time and close out our arrangements with them Dec. 31, 2019. The current arrangement ties up a significant share of our regional finances and will only increase in 202. Discontinuing this arrangement will create gaps that need addressed (see the leadership section, below), yet frees up necessary resources.
- 4) Designate funds in the annual budgets, 2020-2022, to provide seed support and grants to congregational clusters for establishing new ministries or holding special events, and create a process for their distribution.
- 5) Put debt repayment on a payment plan, to be paid back over the length of this next stage of our journey (with a possible larger payment made in 2019, and then equal payments made in 2020, 2021, and 2022).

- 6) Build up a cash reserve to cover 6 months of operating expenses.
- 7) Develop a planned giving strategy, in consultation with the Center for Faith and Giving or other development professionals, possibly to include strategic campaigns (not just for camp). Call a team for promoting regional support with congregations.
- 8) Explore new opportunities for partnership with nonprofits that have greater access to grant funding (as region, districts, and particularly as congregations).
- 9) Develop a plan of sustainability for Camp Christian. (We place this last not because it is the lowest priority, but because a long-term vision is needed for Camp Christian - see the leadership section below).

Leadership. Following a new path requires new models for leadership. We know that we cannot go backward, back to the model that served us as region for decades. We can't because we don't have the finances, at present; even more so because, as empirical data and listening sessions made evident, that model had ceased to effectively serve us. With less financial resources, many of the region's traditional core functions - including support for candidates seeking ordination, for congregations and pastors in search and call, for congregations and pastors experiencing crisis, and for our anti-racism / pro-reconciliation efforts - cannot be driven by paid regional staff. Leadership for most shared regional ministries already came from dedicated Disciples across Ohio and that has only increased over the last two years. As we have embraced dispersed leadership, it is remarkable to see across the life of the region how the gifts and experiences of pastors and church members alike are being offered. Yet there are challenges, particularly with regard to the time that each of us has for serving. Shared leadership, whenever possible, will become a central element for our life together as region. Yet even this may not be enough as ongoing communications challenges have largely remained. Where communications challenges persist, connectedness, which is also challenged in systems with dispersed leadership, will be further strained. The RTT is grateful to Regional Administrator Jennie Stoddart Bernard for her tireless work and her responsiveness to requests for information and support. We are aware that as the sole regional staff person not completely dedicated to Camp Christian (who also carries Camp duties), her plate is full. We wish to be clear that it is not realistic to expect Jennie to take on additional work related to these needs for communication and connectedness. Regional Elders have increasingly stepped up in this time to fill a variety of gaps; they are a source of strength for the network and are on the whole improving our connectedness. Yet their role remains task specific: they cannot alone meet the challenges we face. Some increase in volunteer service focused on communications would be of benefit but is not a cure.

As we embrace the call, as one person put it, "to be more organism, less organization," as we affirm the strengths of dispersed and shared leadership for being in covenant together, we would be well served to have staff whose role it is to help facilitate our common life and ministry. This idea, expressed in comments at several sessions, is summed up well by one who called for "a person to connect us in our covenant [like] a network manager who will facilitate ... not lead." Such a position would be structured to connect congregations around shared missional interests, check in with various working groups or leadership groups (e.g., Board, Regional Elders, etc.), serve as a hub of awareness, and communicate needs and resources available. And communicate good news and bad news. And communicate developments, risks, successes, and failures. And communicate, connect, and communicate. Potential staff will not set mission or direction; instead, they will embody mission and direction as set forth by the community and help support all of us in living out our mission together. While Disciples regions traditionally have a Regional Minister who is engaged in a breadth of denominational activities, a Transitional Regional Curate would be less engaged. They would still serve as a point of connection for the region to the general church, but their participation would necessarily be curtailed. If the funds are available, a second half time position is envisioned to support congregations and pastors in search and call or

experiencing crisis. It is not recommended, even *if* the funds were available, to combine these two half positions into one because at that moment we would more easily fall back on old ways, having a single staff person who comes to embody much of the significant work that is ours to share in, together. The RTT does imagine the possibility of this second position (were it to be funded) being shared, perhaps with an ecumenical partner, and would leave such possibilities to the consideration of the next discernment team. Given the likelihood that such a position is not financially feasible, steps will need to be taken in the remainder of this year to develop a new, pilot system for search and call and for supporting congregations in crisis.

In moving forward with a called Transitional Regional Curate (or any additional staff), we cannot fall back into the thinking that, because someone is on payroll, everything falls onto their plate. That is a strength in our time of financial weakness: the work of being region, of supporting ourselves in service of the Gospel, will still fall on us. Functional groups, such as the Regional Church Council and the Camp Christian Committee, will continue to manage the daily, business side of our life together. At the same time, as we aim to be more organism than organization, more movement than institution, we will require dedicated teams to vision and dream and ask the big questions that lead toward our future. Camp is the perfect example: it is wonderful that there is a committee to ensure ongoing programming and operations. Alongside this group, a future-tasked group would consider the long-term trends, look at what other related programs are experiencing, build relationships with potential collaborators, and help guide us with a vision for the future. Where the first group may primarily be working with a 2 or 3 year outlook, the second group could be looking 10 and 20 years into the future. As Camp ultimately will not be sustainable without healthy and growing communities of faith sending campers, other groups can be tasked with tending to different pieces of the long-term vision for the region, for us as a covenantal network of faith communities. The RTT has been honored to carry the baton for this leg of our journey. We are ready, following the May 11, 2019 Regional Assembly, to pass the baton off to others who will continue the discernment and pursuit of our shared vision.

To this end, we propose the development of three ad hoc teams to continue this work, one for each area of focus above. While each new team should have a representative point of contact with the formal structure (the Regional Church Council), enabling communication and connectedness, they would operate, as the RTT has, with an openness to the Spirit and a sense of adventure for what is possible in a new day and a new way of being together. Other teams would also be appropriate to shape the long-term working of various commissions and committees. These teams can be formed over time by calling persons with the passion and commitment to support their work. They would look something like this:

1. Network Support Team. This team is responsive to encourage, communicate resourcing opportunities, support asset mapping and sharing of results, facilitate relationships (working with Regional Elders), and encourage accessing of grant funding for special events
2. External Partnership Team. This team will explore collaboration between Ohio Region and other denominational partners for a variety of shareable ministries, as well as seek and encourage new missional relationships for the living out of congregational ministries and shared missions
3. Leadership Development Team. This team will promote new ways of supporting and resourcing leadership and advocate for inclusion of the variety of leaders that emerge.
4. Other teams, also ad hoc, might also be developed alongside existing ministries or shared functional groups.

Two prime examples:

- a. A team to reshape search and call

The RTT commends this as a priority. Canceling our contract with neighboring regions effective Jan. 1, 2020 gives necessary urgency to an effort to reconfigure ourselves for supporting pastors and churches

in transition or crisis. An initial pilot can be launched in 2020 and the team will monitor, evaluate, and revise as it's implemented.

- b. A team to focus on the long-term viability and sustainability of Camp Christian alongside the newly energized Camp Committee which is concerned with ongoing operational needs.

In Gratitude

At the end of one listening session, as we gathered at our Lord's Table, a Regional Elder shared: "We have been through a time of crisis. The center did not hold. Things fell apart. And there is no place more appropriate to gather at this time than at the table, which is itself a crisis table, initiated at a time when things would soon appear to fall apart. And yet this table has come to represent our great hope and the hope of the world."

It has been an honor to serve on behalf of you, our brothers and sisters in faith from across Ohio during this time. We have been blessed to receive your concerns and joys, to hear the stories of struggle and of success, and especially to marvel with you at the amazing ways God has moved in and through the members and congregations of the Christian Church in Ohio. We offer this report as witness to the vision that has emerged from much discussing and listening, wrestling, praying and discerning. We are grateful for the trust you expressed in us, to carry out this task. We also know that it is impossible to convey the fullness of our experience which led to this report and recommendations. We know that there will be questions, challenges, and a range of reactions in response. We look forward to the conversations that will follow and trust that they will be marked by the same spirit of hope and grace that meets us at the table, that accompanies us as we journey, and that holds us in relationship as together we live out our calling as disciples of Jesus.

Faithfully, your Regional Transition Team

Josh Baird and Audrey Connor, co-chairs

Amanda Blaine

Chrissy Stonebraker-Martinez

Eric Brown

Jim Rivers

Jeannine Hoover

Keely Veatch

Kevin Greenwald

Vanessa Myers-Dudley

Tomas Hernandez

Willie Barnes-Jackson